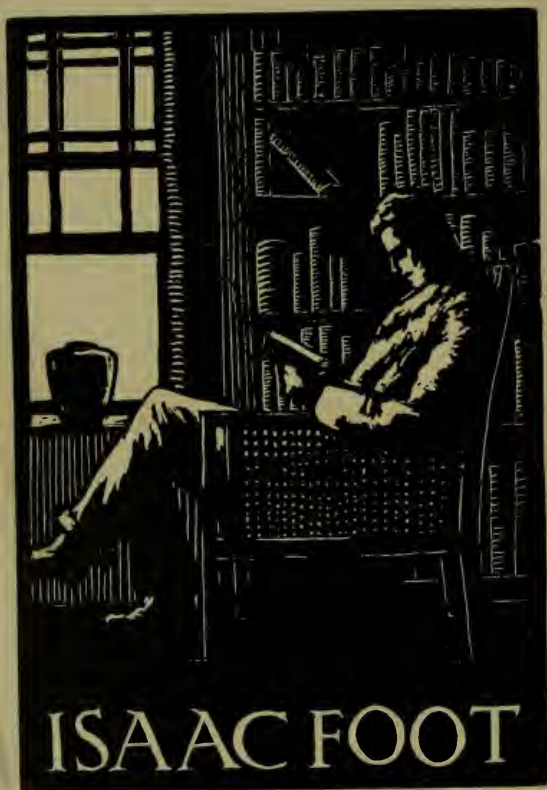


A FAVOURITE
OF
NAPOLEON



MEMOIRS OF
MADEMOISELLE
GEORGE



A FAVOURITE OF NAPOLEON

Horace Bleasley





Mademoiselle George.

N^o 25000. 26

From a painting by Gérard in the possession of Mme la Comtesse Ed. de Pourtalès

A FAVOURITE OF NAPOLEON

MEMOIRS OF MADEMOISELLE GEORGE

EDITED, FROM THE ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT, BY
PAUL CHERAMY

EVELEIGH NASH

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PREFACE BY THE EDITOR

IT is always tiresome to speak about oneself. I am, however, obliged to do so at the beginning of this preface. Some people will doubtless be astonished to see the memoirs of an actress published through the care of a man who for many years has been invested with grave duties—solicitor to the Civil Courts of the Seine, and even in 1893 president of the Society of Solicitors. Two words of explanation are necessary to dissipate this surprise, and palliate the seeming contradiction.

From my childhood I was received by Alexandre Dumas, whose son became much later one of my most intimate friends. Through the author of *Monte Cristo* I was enabled to either listen to or know the greatest actors and actresses of that age: Frédérick Lemaître, Rachel, Geoffroy, Mélingue, Laferrière, Rouvière, Augustine and Madeline Brohan, and many others besides. My taste for the theatre took date from that moment.

A little later a love of painting was awakened within me. I had a friend, a young painter, a pupil of Henri Lehmann. We used to pass all the days of my leave together at the Louvre. Finally music, which has become one of the passions of

my life, called me to herself. I was not yet a Wagnerian, for Richard Wagner was unknown in Paris. I remember the interminable waits I imposed on myself at the Opéra, in the rue Le Peletier, to get a good place in the pit to listen to one of Meyerbeer's works, which sufficed then for my admiration.

With these artistic tastes and an insatiable need of reading I reached the Law Courts. Chance—a happy chance—made a solicitor of me in 1853. That I was a little different to my strict *confères* it would be useless to deny. But I knew law, I loved an action, and had a business sense and instinct, a certain gift of observation, a great memory, and a facility for work, which I have preserved even in my old age. I believe, too, that far from harming me, my artistic and psychological faculties have helped me very much. Whatever may be the reason of it, my continuous success for forty years has surpassed my hopes and feeble deserts.

To-day the hour for retirement has struck. I return to my studies and tastes of former days, though, to speak more strictly, they have never left me. For my old age I have a last ambition: certainly not the proud pretension of becoming a writer. After sixty years one does not acquire the talent of style. I should just like to tell my contemporaries, in the most simple way in the world, a little of what I know, of what I have seen and of what I think on certain subjects. I shall take a

pleasure in obliging myself not to bore too much those who are kind enough to read and listen to me.

After this long preamble, I return to Mlle. George. When I bought her manuscripts my friends made me promise to publish them. Up to now I have never had the leisure or opportunity of doing so. Now I am going to keep my promise. I begin with these amusing Memoirs the various publications which I should like to leave behind me, if nature, who has been clement to me, still allows me for some time strength and health.

At the outset let us describe what these Memoirs are, what is their origin and history.

It was on January 31, 1903, that I bought the manuscript at a public sale. This sale was very curious. Together with the memoirs of the actress, all sorts of tragic tinsel figured: the crowns of Rodogune, Mérope, Marguerite de Bourgogne, Sémiramis, Marie Tudor, which M. Paul Meurice redeemed and presented to the Comédie-Française. There was also the library, or rather what remained of the library of the tragédienne. The original editions of the dramas of Victor Hugo and Alexandre Dumas—*Lucrèce Borgia*, *Marie Tudor*, *Christine*, *la Tour de Nesle*, which must have been given or sold during her lifetime. However, the manuscript of *Vautrin* was to be found there, that of *la Tour de Nesle*, which was bought by M. Henry Houssaye, the very curious tragedies of Alexandre Soumet—*Clytemnestre*,

Norma, *Une Fête sous Néron*, and his beautiful religious poem, *la Divine Épopée*, with laudatory dedications.

At first it was not very easy to sort the scattered leaves, a little out of order, which constituted the original manuscripts of the Memoirs. After having read and re-read them, compressed and classified them, this is how I was able to establish their genesis.

They were written in 1857. Mlle. George was then seventy. She undertook the work to gain a little money. At that time she was in terrible want. She conceived the following plan. Having, as she says and proves, neither style nor much orthography, she noted on slips of paper the most interesting events of her life. She entrusted these leaves to one of her friends, the husband of Marceline Desbordes - Valmore, begging him to revise them and put them into "good French," as we used to say at school. Then to the slightly colourless prose of her husband Mme. Desbordes-Valmore was to add some of the graces, and a little of the poesy of her own style.

Mlle. George's first edition still exists, and we possess as well Valmore's work, which is very terse and tiresome in its monotony and conventional *quasi-elegance*. Mlle. George perceived this. In the margin of this effort of the good rhetorician she noted these reflections: "A little long," "To be worked out," "I must speak to him about this and that," etc. In short, she had the good idea of

doing for herself what Valmore had been unable to realise. She re-wrote her Memoirs and made a cohesive work, which unfortunately ends at 1808, that is to say, on her departure for Russia.

This is the curious autobiography, lively, coloured and attractive, with its mass of repetitions and corrections, which we are publishing to-day, and which forms the principal part of this volume.

After 1808 Mlle. George has only left us isolated fragments, jotted down in haste, without much sequence or method, where several interesting details are still to be found, notably anecdotes about Mme. de Staël, her own sojourn in Sweden, and of the intervention of Charles X on the subject of the privileges of the Odéon. These fragments form the second part of this publication.

In a third part we give a letter from Mlle. Raucourt, and some letters from Mlle. George, which we have been unable to discover elsewhere.

In an Appendix we have incorporated a statement of the services of the actress at the Comédie-Française; Geoffroy's article on her appearances; appreciations by Victor Hugo, Alexandre Dumas, Théophile Gautier, Jules Janin, fragments attributed to Mme. de Rémusat, to the confessions of Arsène Houssaye, and a very curious unpublished letter of Victorien Sardou.

To fix the essential dates and present the career of Mlle. George in its entirety, from her birth to her death, we have compiled a biographical notice,

which will form a sort of introduction to the memoirs of the actress.

We give a reproduction of two portraits; the one by Lagrenée represents her in the rôle of Clytemnestra. This picture, which hung for a long time in Mlle. Mars' bedroom, was presented by us to the Comédie-Française in 1905. It figures in the gallery of artistes. The second portrait is by Baron Gérard. It is a very charming work, which formed part of the collection of the Countess Edmond de Pourtalès. Her kindness, which we gratefully acknowledge, has allowed us to reproduce this extremely characteristic portrait, which will remain for the future the slightly embellished and definite likeness of Mlle. George.

P.-A. CHERAMY.

Riva (Tyrol),
August 1906.

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A FAVOURITE OF NAPOLEON

INTRODUCTION

EUGÈNE DE MIRECOURT, whose *les Contemporains* recently excited so much scandal, has consecrated a sympathetic and annotated little volume to Mlle. George.¹ He has certainly read Valmore's work, of which he reproduces whole passages. In their *Galerie historique de la Comédie-Française*,² MM. de Manne and Ménétrier have written a less benevolent biography of the tragédienne. With these documents, the memoirs of Alexandre Dumas, articles of the period, *le Monde Dramatique*, Théophile Gautier's *l'Histoire de l'art dramatique*, his *Romantic Portraits* and his work on *les Belles Femmes de Paris*, it is easy to reconstruct the life of the woman and artiste, and trace a faithful and life-like portrait of her.

Mlle. Marguerite-Josephine Weymer, called

¹ Eugène de Mirecourt, *les Contemporains. Portraits et silhouettes au dix-neuvième siècle*, 3rd edition. Librairies des contemporains, *Mademoiselle George*, one vol. in 32, 1870.

² *Galerie historique de la Comédie-Française pour servir de complément à la troupe de Talma*, by E.-D. de Manne and C. Ménétrier. Lyon, N. Scheuring, éditeur, 1876.

George, was born on February 23, 1787, at the Theatre of Bayeux, during a performance of *Tartuffe* and *La belle Fermière*.

Her father, George Weymer, of German origin, had formed a little nomad troupe, which went from town to town playing comedy, vaudeville, and even tragedy. He was *impresario* and *chef d'orchestre*. His wife took the parts of soubrettes. Her maiden name was Verteuil, and her nephew was for a long time secretary of the Comédie-Française. The father and mother of Mlle. George were modest, conscientious, honest artistes, full of devotion and heart, and their daughter preserved a gratitude and tenderness for them which did all three credit.

At five years of age Georgette Weymer appeared in *les Deux chasseurs et la Laitière* at the Amiens Theatre, of which her father had become manager. She soon played with the celebrated Dugazon; and finally Mlle. Raucourt, who was passing through Amiens, was astonished at the beauty and exceptional abilities of the young Weymer. She persuaded her father to trust the girl to her keeping, and took her to Paris to give her lessons and prepare her for her début at the Comédie-Française.

Mlle. George obtained her *ordre de début* on November 23, 1802. She was sixteen, and made her début in the part of Clytemnestra.

The choice of this part for the début of such a young girl would be inexplicable if one did not

recall the precocious and sculptural beauty of the débutante. Further, Mlle. Dumesnil and Mlle. Raucourt had recognised that her vocation destined her for the great maternal rôles of tragedy.

All this first part of Mlle. George's career, her visits to Mlles. Clairon and Dumesnil, her débuts, the appreciation of the public, of Geoffroy, whose habitual severity had been disarmed by her beauty and talent, the rivalry with Mlle. Duchesnois, the good comradeship of Talma, the picture of the Comédie-Française under the Consulate, her relations with Prince Sapieha, her amours with Bonaparte, all this is related in the Memoirs with a vivacity and a freshness of recollection which we are unwilling to spoil.

Although their author makes no pretension to judge the marvellous period of the Consulate, the very simplicity of her narrative allows us to guess the charm of those beautiful years from 1802 to 1804, the most beautiful perhaps which France has ever known. She was at last freed from the sectaries of the Revolution. Victorious abroad, France was rising from her ruins, was organising herself anew, and once more beginning to live and to hope. An intelligent and practical policy, which was not formed by Rousseau's school of sophisms, was re-establishing security, confidence, and credit in the interior. It was a magnificent reawakening of all the social forces which the Terror had suppressed and neutralised in blood and mire. How understandable is the admiration which the First

Consul inspired ! “He is my hero !” cried the sexagenarian Sophie Arnould from her retreat at Paraclet.

The enthusiasm experienced by George for the incomparable, *immense* (that is her word) being Bonaparte, was in accordance with the universal sentiment which was expressed by frantic applause whenever the First Consul entered his box at the Théâtre-Français.

On the other hand, these Memoirs are a document of unappreciable value, which disclose in an unexpected way an intimate and little-known side of Napoleon’s character. The question has often been put, “What was the exact attitude of the Emperor towards women ? What was his manner of treating women ?” Replies are contradictory ; and, it must be confessed, mostly unfavourable. Certainly he had for Joséphine and Marie Louise a tenderness which amounted almost to blindness. But these two were Empresses : for him they were above their sex and above humanity. Very many other women passed in his life ; for, absorbed as he was in his political and military duties, and in his various labours, he was ardent and sensual. How did he behave with regard to those other women ? Stendhal has furnished us with terrible revelations. “He made them writhe beneath the lash of his contempt,” he said, speaking of those “other women.” Poor victims ! They thought they were marching to a triumph : they little dreamed of the humiliations which were awaiting them.

“Oh, Monster! Horrible tyrant!” are the cries after hard nights of trial, of Mme. Branchu, the vestal of the Opéra, Mlles. Duchesnois, Thérèse Bourgoïn, Leverd, of the Théâtre-Français, and the ladies of the Court whom the Imperial caprice had seemed to distinguish for an instant.

It must be confessed that, according to Stendhal and other historians, the new Cæsar’s manners were little less than those of a savage. Here we are far from the old French gallantry. Where have fled the graces of the eighteenth century? One can quite understand the feminine hatred, which, gathering secretly, burst out with fury in 1815. The women wished for the death of the Emperor, not because of the conscription, as they said, but because of the insulting disdain with which he had chastised them during his reign.

Now a question presents itself: Was Napoleon always so? Was this harshness towards women founded in the very depths of his nature? I do not think so. The rudeness and violence was, to my mind, the unconscious result of a formidable tension of spirit, of superhuman toil.

In this regard the Memoirs of Mlle. George afford us a decisive light which will rejoice the heart of friends of the great Emperor. After having read them one can no longer doubt that in his time Bonaparte was a tender, thoughtful lover, full of juvenile ardour, as much in love as an officer of twenty. It is in this sympathetic and entirely new aspect that George reveals him—that

immense man really loved his beautiful tragédienne, and let himself be charmed by her fresh, loyal nature. He amused himself with her artless chatter; in her company he experienced a relaxation of mind and a distraction which his nerves and brain at fever-pitch were in need of.

He liked to frolic with George like a great child, to tease the superb creature who at the beginning of the liaison he felt was entirely his. He laughed at her plebeian feet, as he placed a considerable value on delicacy of extremities with women. Happily George had admirable hands, the hands of a queen and a child; they obtained pardon for her feet, which were heavy and common. It is true that they had no ordinary weight to support.

Perhaps it will be said that to raise the value of her conquest it pleased George to exaggerate its charm; that she has shown us a Bonaparte of phantasy, softened and embellished by the proud complaisance of her recollections? I do not believe it. Napoleon's tenderness for her, and consequently the sensibility of which he was capable, seem to me a point absolutely demonstrated. The liaison continued from 1802 to 1808. Here it is not a question of a simple caprice vanishing after possession, nor of an attraction entirely sensual, where sentiment has no part. It was a veritable affection. It lasted till Napoleon's death. At St. Helena he spoke of her whom he had formerly called his beautiful Georgina, or his good Georgina.

In 1808, at the date where the Memoirs stop,

the triumphant existence of Mlle. George became suddenly clouded. The intrigues of Mlle. Duchesnois, her rival, protected by M. de Rémusat, became intolerable. The Emperor has changed ; he is no longer the lover of the first year of the Consulate. The unknown Bonaparte, who appears so full of charm in the Memoirs, is a little transformed with the grandeurs and cares of omnipotence. He is not separated from her, but George imagines herself to be nothing more than a habit to him. She knows that she is surrounded by rivals, and is humiliated at the thought of offering no more to her imperial lover than an intermittent distraction and a banal source of pleasure.

She listened then to the offers of the Russian ambassador, Count Tolstoy. She was carried away by the insistence of her lover, Count de Beckendorf. He had promised to marry her, but he wished first of all to offer her to his master, Alexander I. In short, yielding to a sudden caprice, which twenty-four hours later she will regret, she sets off for St. Petersburg, on the evening of the fourth performance of Debrieu's *Artaxerxes*, in which she should have played the part of Mandane (May 7, 1808). The performance was waited for in vain, and there was a great scandal at the Comédie. An order for the arrest of the fugitive was given, but she had already passed the frontier.

At St. Petersburg her success was immense. She charmed the Emperor Alexander, the Dowager-Empress and the Grand Duke Constantine. She

made her début at the Imperial Theatre in the part of Sémiramis. After the performance the Emperor came to her dressing-room to congratulate her. "Madame," he said, "you wear the crown better than our great Catherine."

"Sire, it is less heavy than that of All the Russias." The Emperor sent her a splendid crown made from the model of that worn formerly by the Empress Catherine II.

Another evening, after *Méropé*, the Emperor, wiping his eyes, said to her, "These are the first tears I have ever shed in a theatre."

Still, if she became Alexander's mistress, it was only a passing caprice. A certain party had hoped that George would replace Mme. Nariskine with the Tsar. The plan miscarried, but Alexander and the whole Court did not cease from loading the actress with attentions and presents.

If we can believe the memoirs of the Russian General Löwenstein, she extended her conquests even among the great ladies of the Russian Court. That is doubtless but an ugly calumny.

In the midst of these raptures and festivities the campaign of 1812 began. At St. Petersburg the battle of Moskow was regarded as a victory. The order to illuminate their windows was given to the inhabitants. In spite of the order George's windows remained closed without illuminations. "She is right," said the Emperor. "I do not wish her to be annoyed about it; she is behaving like a good Frenchwoman."

Sojourn in Russia became impossible for her. She kept till death her passionate cult of Napoleon. She could not remain in St. Petersburg to listen to the tale of the terrible retreat of the great army. Some notes tell us of her departure for Sweden and her arrival at Stockholm. The Prince Royal, Bernadotte, received her as a queen and a friend. She rejoined the French Army at Dresden. Napoleon made her play with Talma, and the troupe of the Comédie-Française had been sent for post-haste. Every day she was received by the Emperor, who discoursed with her and Talma about the Théâtre-Français, Corneille and Racine, on the eve of the battle of Leipsig.

By Imperial decree George was restored to all her rights as a member of the Society. Napoleon even commanded that she should be paid for her years of absence. It was a little excessive, and, as M. Frédéric Masson remarked, the members never forgave her this favour, which savoured too much of favouritism and arbitrariness.

“During the Hundred Days,” the eminent historian tells us, “she sent word to the Emperor that she had some papers to restore to him which singularly compromised the Duke of Otranto. Napoleon sent a trusted servant to her, and on his return he said : “She didn’t tell you that she was in low water, I suppose ?”

“No, sire ; she only spoke of her desire to restore the papers herself to your Majesty.”

“I know what that means. Caulaincourt spoke

to me about it; he told me, too, that she was in difficulties. You will give her twenty thousand francs from my purse."

Alexandre Dumas affirms that Mlle. George solicited the honour of accompanying the Emperor to St. Helena. We do not know if this is a fact, but it would greatly redound to the credit of the lover of the First Consul. In the midst of treasons and defections, this proof of gratitude on the part of an actress would have been a beautiful thing.

After the fall of the Emperor, confronted with the Royalist hostilities of her comrades, George felt cruelly out of place at the Comédie-Française. She was dismissed by the Duke de Duras, superintendent of theatres, for bravely showing herself with a bouquet of violets in her corsage. The Government punished thus that innocent Bonapartist manifestation.

Mlle. George went to play in the provinces. Five years later, Louis XVIII, who was a sensible man, recalled her to the Comédie, and gave her a benefit at the Opéra. She played *Britannicus*. The reception was enormous. After this triumph it seemed as if she ought to resume her place as a member of the Society. But at the hands of Mlle. Duchesnois and her partisans she again suffered from the intrigues and evil practices of former times. She preferred to play at the Odéon *Sémiramis*, *Méropé*,¹ *Clytemnestre*, *l'Orphelin de la*

¹ October 1, 1822.

Chine, les Macchabees of Guiraud.¹ She afterwards appeared in *Saul*,² *Cléopâtre* and *Jeanne d'Arc* ³ by Soumet. But soon a new triumphal career began to open out before her.

She became the admirable interpreter of the first romantic dramas. She created *Christine*, by Frédéric Soulié;⁴ then the *Christine* of Dumas; *Une Fête sous Néron*, by Soumet;⁵ *la Maréchale d'Ancre*, by Alfred de Vigny;⁶ *Jeanne la Folle*, by Fontan.⁷

This was but the prelude of more brilliant successes. Under Harel's direction, at the Porte-Saint-Martin, the great tragédienne became, with Frederick Lemaître, the highest incarnation of romantic drama, and was successively Marguerite de Bourgogne in *la Tour de Nesle* (March 29, 1832), Lucrèce Borgia (February 12, 1833), Marie Tudor (November 17, 1833), and the Marquise de Brinvilliers. In the Appendix will be read some beautiful pages by Victor Hugo dedicated to her.

¹ June 14, 1822.

² November 9, 1822, Mlle. George played in *le Comte Julien* of Guiraud, and de Liaidière's *Jane Shore*, April 2, 1824.

³ *Cléopâtre*, July 2, 1824; *Jeanne d'Arc*, May 14, 1825.

⁴ October 13, 1829.

⁵ *Une Fête sous Néron*, October 29, 1829; *Christine*, by A. Dumas, March 30, 1829.

⁶ The first performance of *la Maréchale d'Ancre* took place on June 25, 1830. On June 21 the piece had to be interrupted after the second act because of the indisposition of Mlle. George. The real *première* took place on June 25. The drama was coldly received.

⁷ *Jeanne la Folle*, August 28, 1829.

In spite of this incomparable répertoire, little by little the public abandoned the Porte-Saint-Martin. The fusillades in the rue Transnonain and at Cloître-Saint-Merry absorbed all their attention. Harel finally succumbed. The prohibition of Balzac's *Vautrin*, on the morning of the first performance, led to the closing of the theatre.

After a great tour in Italy, Austria, and Russia, Mlle. George gave at the Italiens some performances of *Britannicus* and *Lucrèce Borgia* (January 1843). They were a very great success.

At the Odéon, under the Lireux management, George played Marie Tudor with Mme. Marie Dorval, for whom she had a great friendship,¹ then *la Chambre Ardente* at the Gaiety, and *la Tour de Nesle* with Frederick Lemaître, at the Porte-Saint-Martin.²

It is known that Frederick Lemaître, perhaps the greatest comedian who ever existed, had a detestable character. He was fond of tippling, but played admirably even when he was drunk. He was quite unbearable under the influence of several bottles of champagne or Burgundy. One evening he had to play with George; he declared that he would not appear on the stage unless a certain sum due on his salary was paid to him. All the protestations of the manager and George's tears were useless. The hour for beginning the performance arrived. In those days there was never much money in a manager's chest. So

¹ January 1844.

² December 1844.

as not to lose the performance Marguerite de Bourgogne sacrificed herself. She sent her jewellery to the pawn-shop, and gave Frederick the sum lent. Never was Buridan more magnificent, he surpassed himself; but it is probable that George never managed to redeem her diamonds so generously pledged.

The moment was approaching when Mlle. George would be forced to retire. A stoutness which she had never been able to check rendered her walk painful and heavy. She had become enormous. Her voice, which had formerly been so touching, was cracked. Her gestures had little by little lost their majesty. After a short appearance in historical répertoire, and several unfortunate attempts in the provinces, George was obliged to renounce the theatre.

It was on May 27, 1849, that she gave her farewell performance. Mlle. Rachel had consented to appear with George. It was a memorable evening, which provided the presence of Clytemnestra and the creator of *Lucrèce Borgia*, and Mlle. Rachel, who had immediately won since her initial appearance the first place in the Théâtre-Français.

Rachel, whom we saw in *Cinna* and in the first performance of *Diane*, has left us such great recollections; she had been so admirably trained by Eugène Delacroix, one of our dear and favourite masters; Rachel, in short, seemed to us such a luminous and sculptural figure, that it is hard for us to admit the malicious tales to which this meeting

of the two tragedy actresses gave rise. Up till now we have practically followed Mirecourt's brochure. We will now borrow from him with due reserve the actual text of this famous battle.

"The battle," he said, "took place at the Italiens. Rachel played the part of Eriphyle, in *Iphigenia in Aulis*, and George filled the part of Clytemnestra. Mlle. Félix was literally squashed. Pale and trembling she followed, in the wings, book in hand, the tirades of Clytemnestra, and tore her hair in despair, exclaiming, 'Heavens! I shall never reach that; what vigour!'

"At the moment when Mlle. George appeared, a furious hissing arose from a certain part of the orchestra where young Félix was sitting. 'That is not meant for me, surely?' said Clytemnestra to the house majestically.

"All the spectators arose with a leap of angry protestation. Two hundred bouquets fell at the feet of the famous tragédienne, and for five minutes the cheers hindered the continuance of her part. When Rachel appeared after this ovation, which had been provoked by the imprudence of her partisans, her eye was burning with anger. She ventured to say to some one behind the scenes, letting escape a gesture of disdain, 'Remove those flowers, one can't walk for them.'

"A burst of hissing, better supported than the first, greeted this insolent whim. Nobody protested.

" 'The case is judged,' said Victor Hugo. 'We

have come to see the statuette alongside the statue. What a reduction ! ”

Mlle. Félix, in virtue of promises on the bills, ought to have played *le Moineau de Lesbie* at the end of the evening. Furious at the humiliation which she had had to endure, she went up to her dressing-room, resumed her ordinary costume, and disappeared. Instead of the piece announced, the public were begged to be kind enough to listen to a *grand air* by Mme. Viardot.

“Certainly,” was the cry from the house. “We accept the nightingale in place of the sparrow ! ”

We do not forget that, for reasons perhaps easy to guess, Mirecourt was an implacable enemy of Rachel. There was bound to be in his account not a little phantasy and exaggeration. Théophile Gautier, in his pamphlet, relates none of the incidents of which Mirecourt speaks. However, in an article in *Profils et Grimaces*, which we reprint in the Appendix, Auguste Vacquerie, who did not love Rachel, is just as affirmative as the pamphleteer. In fact, a letter which will be found further on in George’s correspondence mentions the refusal of Rachel to play *le Moineau de Lesbie*, and an acrimonious dispute on the part of Hermione with regard to her illustrious predecessor.

After this performance Mlle. George was appointed an inspectress of the Conservatoire.

On December 17, 1857, she had her real farewell performance at the Comédie-Française.

She played Rodogune, and was still able to give an admirable rendering. A whole generation, which had never had the chance of applauding her, was profoundly moved by the nobility of her diction and gestures, "and the sculptural and still truly grandiose aspect of her person."¹

"She has more than the beauty of old age," wrote M. Edouard Thierry, "she has the old age of beauty."

After this performance, which had been a veritable triumph for her, she was never again to appear before the public. Her last years were hard. Very generous to all those around her, she had kept nothing of her fortune of former times. I believe the Government of the Second Empire gave her a pension.²

She spoke of Napoleon with a respectful and catching emotion. "But," said M. Frédéric Masson excellently, "it was not the lover she evoked, but the Emperor. And, *cette fille* (doesn't the word seem a little hard?), not from the modesty of an old woman—for she spoke freely

¹ *Journal intime de la Comédie-Française*, 1852-1871, by George d'Heylli.

² I have been told—but I am not able to affirm the fact—that for the Universal Exhibition of 1855 she obtained the concession of the little *chalets de nécessité*. A sad compensation for a queen of beauty and tragedy! Alas, poor Clytemnestra! poor Marie Tudor!

As is often the case with prodigals, she had much material order, her account books are admirably kept. Nearly every day ten centimes figure for snuff, of which she consumed a great quantity, like all the people of her time.

and crudely of her other lovers—but from a sort of respectful fear, seemed no longer to recall the fact that he had found her beautiful, and had told her so. She no longer saw the man he had been for her, but the man he had been for France, like those nymphs who, honoured for an instant by the caresses of a god, never regarded his visage, dazzled as they were by the blinding light of his glory.”

M. Ludovic Halévy tells us that one day, at the Tuileries, being at the ministry of the Imperial household, he received a visit from George, who came as a suppliant.

It was the hour of mounting guard. The drums were beating. The Emperor Napoleon III appeared on the terrace of the Tuileries to receive the guard, which was about to go on duty. George placed herself at the window, attracted by the spectacle. She turned round quite moved, with tears in her eyes. “Ah!” she exclaimed, “I have seen that very often—in former times—under *the other*.”

“When I die,” George had said, “I should like to be buried in Rodogune’s cloak.”

She died at Passy, 3 rue de Ranelagh, on January 11, 1867. She was eighty years old.

The Emperor took on himself the expenses of her burial, which took place in the cemetery of Père-Lachaise.

Let us now try to form an impartial judgment of her talent and character as woman and artiste.

All her contemporaries are agreed in celebrating her marvellous beauty. Before her débuts, when she appeared on the balcony of the Comédie-Française, the public applauded her entry. She had to rise to thank the crowd of anonymous admirers.

As the critic Geoffroy remarks, "One dreams involuntarily of the enthusiasm of the old men of Troy when Helen passed before them with the radiant prestige of her irresistible charm."

In *les Belles Femmes de Paris*, Théophile Gautier has dedicated to George one of his most admirable pages. He compares her to an Isis of the bas-reliefs of Ægina. He speaks of her superbly disdainful mouth like that of an avenging Nemesis, waiting for the hour to unmuzzle her lion with brazen claws. After having said that one of her bracelets would make a girdle for a woman of less stature, he adds that her arms were very white and clear, terminated by wrists of an infantile delicacy and by sweet little hands broken by dimples, regular little royal hands, made to carry the sceptre and grasp the sword-hilt of Æschylus and Euripides.

This marvellous portrait describes her better, perhaps, than even the painters themselves inspired by the tragédienne.

The portrait by Lagrenée, the date of which we cannot fix with precision, shows us a Clytemnestra or an Emilia already very robust and very imposing. The painter has not forgotten the lines of the arms and the delicacy of the hands. It is

understood that the feet are not to be mentioned, so as not to vex Napoleon.

In the portrait which he made of her,¹ Gérard has concealed the embonpoint of his model; he has reduced and refined her a little. The portrait is only a bust, but the head has the radiance, the sweet majesty, and the smile of an ancient goddess.

In his memoirs, Alexandre Dumas, who was for a little George's lover, tells us that she did not disdain to show herself without covering in taking her bath, proud of offering to the glances of her admirers the pure forms of her marble-like nudity.

Everything passes, alas! and inflexible time has no respect for masterpieces either of art or of human beauty. A deplorable obesity invaded this woman's body, which the perfection of its lines should have protected. In the last years of her life, the goddess seemed like a sort of mastodon. Her face alone preserved some traces of majesty.

Now what was the artiste's talent? Unfortunately nothing remains of actor or actress. Some recollections of contemporaries and nothing more. Was George, as MM. de Manne and Ménétrier say, a mediocre artiste without great originality, more adapted to play drama than tragedy? Was she on

¹ Gérard's portrait belonged to Vivant-Denon, the witty superintendent of museums of the First Empire, and the author of the adorable tale, *Pas de lendemain*. At the sale which took place after the decease of Denon, in 1826, the portrait of George was purchased for a ridiculous price (2010 francs) by the painter Perignon. It belongs now to the Countess de Pourtalès.

the contrary the inspired artiste, touching and sublime, whom Victor Hugo and Alexandre Dumas have celebrated? She interpreted their works; unconsciously they may have slightly forced the note of admiration.

I estimate that the truth can be found between these two appreciations.

At sixteen George made the old Dumesnil weep, in reciting the tirades of Clytemnestra. Her professor, Mlle. Raucourt, who was herself a great tragédienne and woman of ability, judged that her pupil's talent called her to play the great maternal rôles of tragedy. Family affection was much stronger in George than the sense of love. She was bound to be a Clytemnestra, a Mérope, a magnificent Idamé, if to her talent one adds the beauty of her person, the vigour and power of her gestures and her voice. When she approached the Romantic drama, to which she had brought that firmness of diction which the study of tragedy alone gives, she must have been truly splendid in Marguerite de Bourgogne, in Lucrèce Borgia, in Marie Tudor. But she could never have had the tragic acuteness, nor that which I should call the ancient distinction, the plastic sculptural lines of Rachel, nor the unrivalled sovereign grace and artistic intelligence of Sarah Bernhardt.

To define George's talent is to speak at the same time of her character. She had never had a child of her own, but maternity was her vocation. She was thoroughly good and generous, incapable

of malice or rancour. There is not a bitter line or cruel word in her Memoirs. I seem to see them issuing from her with an amiable and sweet smile. Victor Hugo said, in speaking of Queen Anne, "*She was proud of being fat.*"¹ I believe that the saying could be applied to George. Sardou's letter, which will be found further on, states that in her last years on the stage she preserved a great air and great dignity. Once retired from the stage she became negligent and more and more heavy. She became the "fat mamma" of whom Sardou speaks at the end of his letter.

In spite of the tales, perhaps a little embellished, of her relations with Bonaparte, and in spite of her long liaison with Harel, her lover and manager, I do not believe that George was very amorous and sensual. Among her admirers are mentioned Talleyrand, Murat, the Prince of Wurtemberg, Lucien Bonaparte, King Jerome, the Emperor Alexander I, Coster de Saint-Victor, Count Beckendorf, Jules Janin, Alexandre Dumas, and others besides. But these were only passing whims. The liaison with Harel was lasting, perhaps, because there was no promise on either side of absolute fidelity. Whatever may be the reason of it, I should be disposed to think that on account of her buxom figure and lazy nature love was a considerable fatigue to her. George must have preferred to show herself off, to cause her charms

¹ Victor Hugo, *l'homme qui rit*. Paris, libraire Lacroix, Verboeckhoren et Cie, 1869, vol. ii, p. 86.

to be admired, to be complaisant in agreeable preludes rather than to give herself in fiery and passionate transports. She had none of the temperament of her friend Marie Dorval, the frenzied lover, whose correspondence I shall one day publish. She indeed was—

Vénus tout entière à sa proie attachée !

and the *amoureuse par excellence*, and the Phèdre of the nineteenth century.

Quite otherwise was the calm, serene and abundant Marie Tudor. With a rather mediocre intelligence, good even to blindness, generous, scattering around her all she had gained, enduring poverty with gaiety, it was, I imagine, from her easy-going nature, her sweetness of soul, her curiosity, more than from passion, that she must have abandoned herself to the caresses of a lover.

Her Memoirs, full of filial tenderness, of gratitude to the Emperor and the Bonapartes, of indulgence for all, make us love her. This woman, whom sovereign beauty and imperial conquests might have made vain and haughty—never knew how to hate nor hurt any one at all. This is an eulogy which not all great artistes have known how to deserve. There is very often a little ferocity among gods, and above all in the souls of goddesses.

And now let us allow Mlle. George to talk.

FIRST PART

THE ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT

I

Her Birth and Family

THE *Journal de Bayeux* suggests and gives details about my somewhat original birth. Leaving Bayeux at the age of ten months in the company of a beautiful fresh Norman nurse called Marianne, my father and mother came to Amiens—my father as *chef d'orchestre*, my mother to play the part of soubrette,¹ and my brother Charles, who already at five years old scraped the violin.

As quite a little one I was said to be very pretty. My nurse, proud of her nursling, yielded easily to the requests of the chief ladies of the town, who wanted to have the little Mimi every day, and

¹ George (Marguerite-Joséphine Weimar, called Mlle.), born at Bayeux, February 23, 1787; appeared on 8 Frimaire in the year xi (November 28, 1802); Sociétaire, March 17, 1804; left, May 11, 1808; Russia, 1811; returned, September 29, 1813; retired, May 8, 1817; Odéon, 1822; Porte-Saint-Martin, 1831; dies at Passy, 3 rue du Ranelagh, January 11, 1866; buried at the cemetery of Père-Lachaise (Georges Monval, *Alphabetic List of Members of the Comédie-Française, from Molière to the Present Day*, one vol. in 8vo, Chararay, 1900).

loaded her with little bonnets, etc. The nurse was not forgotten, which kept her very docile, so she was never fatigued with having her big baby all day in her arms! On reaching the age of five, several abilities were discovered in me: I had even then a pretty voice, and I was a musician by instinct. How could I have helped being one? My father was a German and a great musician, my brother occupied himself only with his violin; I was always singing and strumming on a wretched spinnet, which prepared me for the piano.

Little money was being made at the theatre, and my father was in despair. The idea came to him of teaching me to sing the part of Perrette in *la Petite Victoire*, an opera in one act. He was happy to see his Mimi would acquit herself well, and set about preparing this opera; rehearsals proved that I should hold my own, and so there I was set out and launched on the stage!

A fortunate début, which poured an ample harvest into the coffer, restored courage to the poor actors, because my quite infantile appearance produced such a marvellous effect that forty consecutive performances were given to full houses.

Really I was a great personage; in fact, it was very curious to see the little five-year-old dairy-maid, so small that, for the milk-can which I had to carry on my head my mother was obliged to give me a cup, and I had, which made the thing completely farcical, a Guillot and a Colas as big as Don Quixote. I have always kept my costume,

so dear are all the recollections of my childhood to me. Alas! why are they so sweet and so sad at the same time?

My brother, at the age of ten, took his place in the orchestra as second fiddle. Ah, we were all at work! My father did not at all neglect our education; for me there was a music master, for my brother and me language, drawing, history, and even dancing masters. Nothing was spared to meet all the expenses. My father dabbled a little in business; he was loved and esteemed, and he was helped by every means to bring up his little family. Poor father, how often he passed his nights in copying music! He was thus able to bring a little comfort into the house; and my dear little mother, who was so proud of her children, kept us with an exemplary care and cleanliness.

I was very accurate at my lessons. As managers we had our own apartments, I mean to say rooms, at the theatre, and all the time I was having my lessons I heard the orchestra, and in spite of the reprimands of my master I would run and stretch myself in a box. My nurse, Marianne, came in a fury to destroy my happiness, threatening to tell my mother, of whom I was more afraid than my father. It was all in vain for them to say that they did not wish to place me on the stage, that it was an atrocious livelihood, that they had only let me play to amuse myself, and that I must not dream of it: it was quite useless. I adored the theatre—so there! They saw very well that it

was my vocation, and yielded. Then I was made to play in opera, comedy and vaudeville. Often stock companies came to Amiens. Mme. Dugazon, of the Opéra-Comique (then Feydeau), played *Nina ou la Folle par amour*, the part which brought her such a great and well-deserved reputation; it was the most touching thing in the world. She had to fight against her physique, because of embonpoint; her face was charming and full of expression, while her eyes were ravishing. She was the sister of our Dugazon¹ of the Théâtre-Français.

She played *Camille ou le Souterrain*, while I took the part of her son Adolph, dressed in a little coat of white grogram and a pink sash, with my long hair falling in corkscrews on my shoulders. I looked very pretty and charmed Mme. Dugazon, who was the most excellent and clever woman one could wish to see—kind and simple, never speaking of her immense talent. Great and true artistes are really always modest, and you will remark that they never talk of their successes.

Once my father said to me—I may have been ten years old at the time—“My dear daughter Mimi” (my poor dear German father! Ah, we had the misfortune to have a *pure* German father!—other-

¹ Dugazon (J. B. Henri-Gourgoud), born at Marseilles, November 15, 1746; made her début, April 29, 1771; Sociétaire, April 10, 1772; passed to the Théâtre de la rue Richelieu in April 1791; general reunion, 1709; died, still on the stage, at Sandillon (Loiret), October 10, 1809 (Georges Monval, *Liste alphabétique des Sociétaires*, etc.).

wise, who knows? we might have been hotel proprietors), “just stay by the cash-box for an hour; your mother is playing in the first piece. Take your mother’s muff, you might be cold. Notice everything that goes on.”

“Yes, papa!”

So I am installed at the pay-box. Why?—not to receive money! The weather was fearful before the performance; it was snowing horribly, and in the country, where private carriages are very rare, people go very seldom to the theatre. However, some people arrive, and two or three miserable suppléments. I was bored and hungry. I placed the fifteen pennies of supplément money in my muff, and sent a certain Fanchonnette, who was sitting beside me, to fetch six puffs, all warm, and I regaled everybody. But as the public was absent, my father arrived just as the puffs had been devoured. And (oh dear!) he said to me, “my good Mimi, we shall not play; the money must be returned!”

Return the money! it would be easier to return the puffs which we have just eaten! “Ah, mon Dieu! that would be a very bad plan—you would wrong yourself. Don’t do that, believe your Mimi.”

During this little dialogue, while I trembled in all my limbs, fortunately the weather grew calmer, and people began to arrive. There was a performance. See how innocence was protected! The lesson was a good one; however, I confessed

my fault to my father, saying to him, "But I had my little purse, papa, and I would have paid you back. It was very naughty and greedy of me."

I was very jealous for my little mother. I liked to see her well turned out. But I scarcely ever had to wish on that score; she was very careful, very tasteful, and even a little bit of a flirt, was my little mother! For the rest, she was very nice-looking, though not actually pretty; but she had hair which nearly touched the ground, and charming hands and arms, and a bosom and shoulders of dazzling whiteness. One could say of her, "That is a charming little woman." She was also a proud little woman; one could see she had been born for a more brilliant lot, poor little mother! She had fallen to an excellent man, who often laughed at her grand airs. "Will madame la comtesse permit a plebeian to offer her a simple bouquet of roses?" Then to see my mother very well turned out in a part (I no longer recall which) where flowers and ribbons were necessary, I purchased them. "I will pay you for them out of my little economies. Say nothing to mamma; I am going to give her a surprise."

"Mamma, see, isn't that pretty? I am going to make you a present out of my savings."

Mamma appeared to believe me, saying to herself, "I will pay from my daughter's savings."

The piece once over, I said, "Bah! let them wait;" and gradually I depleted my little purse

to pay for puffs and macaroons. When I passed the shopkeepers, they said :

“ Well, Mimi, when are you coming ? ”

“ To-morrow, madame. ”

But to-morrow never arrived. I no longer dared go out. One day my father said to me, “ Have you had your lessons ? ”

“ Yes, papa. ”

“ Well, my daughter, take this letter quickly to the post. ”

I had to pass those shopkeepers, and made unbelievable détours. I ended by confessing everything to my father, saying, “ Don’t tell mamma about it. Here is my beautiful copper chain ; sell it and pay for me. I did it from pride in your wife ; you will pardon me. ” My good father, was I not his idol ? Besides, I made him as happy as possible. “ Did I not, dear papa ? You are up above ; tell me that you never had to reproach your Mimi. ”

This is by no means childish nonsense. I have already told you that my father gave us all the masters possible ; it was our fault, then, if we did not profit by them. I was very good at the piano, but I was so timid that when my father said to me, “ Sit down and play us something, ” I cut the tips of my fingers to make them bleed. It was not naughtiness, it was really fear, which was stronger than I ; still it often happened that between the acts my father made me execute sonatas, and my brother accompanied me on his violin. I was

surrounded and embraced. "You have been very nice, Mimi." My mother, who was playing in *Paul et Virginie*, said, "She is better in great actions. She makes me weep on the stage; in gay things she is sad and boring." Away with the pathetic, since in those days everything was sweet! Ah, how amusing all these details were! What happy times! Charming joy of childhood, how much I have regretted you! We were not rich, but we were so happy. All the family was busy—how could we ever be bored? My father and mother had everybody's esteem, and we were admitted into the best society. There was not a ball or a festival without Mme. George's children. It was so jolly; to dream of another existence would have saddened our hearts. But I cry, "Alas—yes, alas, Mlle. Raucourt!" My life of childhood, which I believed eternal, is going to end; now a brilliant, ambitious, tormenting existence is about to begin! A Parisian actress in the first theatre in the world! That is grand, but often sad. Farewell, my Amiens; farewell, my little sails on the water, my joyous dances with my madcap little companions! I shall return. You will see me again, certainly, in my elegance. I shall arrive at the theatre in a carriage; you will, all of you, crowd round to see your little Mimi. Well, believe me, my dear friends, your little Mimi will never forget you, and will always love her cotton dress and her beautiful blue stockings with orange embroidery.

Mlle. Raucourt¹ was beautiful, but very imposing; she caused me dreadful fear. I fled whenever I saw her. She certainly noticed me, for she said to my father, "Tell your beautiful little savage to come here." Then I could not avoid her, and I was face to face.

Mlle. Raucourt was very gracious when she wanted to be so. So she assumed an amiable manner, and asked me if I liked tragedy.

"I, madame? No, I detest it."

"Ah, my dear, that is very little encouragement for what I have to ask you."

"What, madame?"

"You must play Aricie for me, my child, in *Phèdre*."

"I should like to, madame, if mamma allows me."

Aricie, the little sailor, or Blaise and Babet, as far as I was concerned I saw no great difference. So I played Aricie; the Greek costume suited my face and figure very well. Mlle. Raucourt actually found some tragic ability in me. How did I come by it? I have no idea.

¹ Raucourt (Françoise-Marie-Antoinette-Josèphe Sancerotte), born at Paris, rue de la Vielle-Boucherie, March 3, 1756; pupil of Brizard and Mlle. Clairon; made her début, December 23, 1772; left, May 28, 1776 (for Russia); returned August 28, 1779; received, September 11 following; réunion générale, May 30, 1799; manager of a French troupe in Italy; died at Paris, rue du Helder, January 15, 1815; her obsequies were a disgrace to Saint-Roch; interred in the cemetery of Père-Lachaise (Georges Monval, etc.).

This first attempt was too much for my repose, for she made me play again—Elise in *Didon*. My physique seemed sufficiently tragic to her to wear the crown, perhaps, one day. In fact, Mlle. Raucourt was charged by the minister to find a young girl whom she could bring up as pupil to replace her, if possible. The minister offered a pension of twelve hundred francs till the day of her début.

Thinking she had found in me this pupil, she begged my father to go and see her, and told him her projects concerning me. Everything was arranged. My mother, as was right, would accompany me, as well as my good nurse and little sister. I was enrolled. What good-byes to my good Amienois, and what tears! What a personage I was! I made my adieux by a special performance: *Adèle ou la Chaumière*. There was a great crowd at the theatre, and I ask you if the little Mimi was fêted? At this period it was scarcely the custom to encore or to throw bouquets—I had all the honours: flowers, encores, and heaps of boxes of bonbons. What touched me infinitely was that the ladies sent me very nice little trinkets. After everything was over, we were occupied with preparations for departure. For the sake of her daughter's future happiness, my little mother was giving up her profession; my father was separating from us for the first time—a decision which caused him great pain.

Well, three days later, behold us starting for

Paris in a large vehicle, which vanity tempts us to style a coach.

Here we are—father, mother, nurse, and sister. Two whole days to cover thirty leagues. We stayed at a very modest little hotel, as you can well imagine, Hôtel Thionville, in the rue de Thionville, now-a-days rue Dauphine.

II.

Arrival at Paris—The Théâtre-Français under the Consulate—Studies with Mlle. Raucourt, Mlle. Duchesnois, Mlle. Clairon, Mlle. Dumesnil—Her débuts.

NEXT day, our first care was to call on Mlle. Raucourt, who then lived in the Champs-Élysées, at the end of the allée des Veuves, at la Chaumière, which formerly had belonged to the celebrated and beautiful Mme. Tallien. It was a house covered with thatch, but delightfully attractive, with a very tasteful elegance within. Mlle. Raucourt gave us a most maternal reception : there was a certain Mme. de Ponty with her who never left her, a charming little woman, whose mother, we learned afterwards, had been a maid-of-honour to Marie Antoinette. During the Revolution, Mme. de Ponty was imprisoned at the same time as Mmes. Raucourt, Contat, etc.¹ It was in this sad abode that a

¹ Contat aînée (Louise-Françoise, wife of the Marquis de Parny-Deforges), born at Paris, June 16, 1760 ; made her début,

friendship was established between Mmes. de Ponty and Raucourt, which only ended with the death of Mlle. Raucourt.

I was given the part of Emilie from *Cinna* to learn. Then the three of us came back (on foot, of course), all very delighted, especially my parents.

As for me, I was not so full of wonder as all that. I was always dreaming of Amiens and my operas. And here I was to study that great figure Emilie.

Oh dear! Mamma, whatever do all these long speeches mean? I don't understand a word. I shall never be able to say my part.

Not being able to remain at the hotel, modest as it was, we searched for apartments—pardon, I should say a room. We found one, Hôtel du Perou (the title was attractive), in the rue Croix-des-Petits-Champs. A large room, on my word, looking out on to some fine gutters, with a small chamber for my nurse and little sister. But my good father was obliged to leave us, and then I cursed my unhappy fate! With my father far from us, it seemed as if we were abandoned and alone in the midst of an unknown and doubtless indifferent world.

Good-bye, dear papa! Do not leave us too long without you; you know that cannot be. Oh, the family! How can one form any other wish than

February 3, 1776; accepted on trial, March 26, 1777; Sociétaire, April 3, 1777; retired, March 6, 1809; died at Paris, 56 rue de Provence, March 9, 1813; interred at Père-Lachaise (Georges Monval, *Liste alphabétique des Sociétaires*, etc.).

that of being always united. As for me, the family sentiment has always prevailed. There have been caprices and passions, if you like. When we are carried away by passion we say, "Yes; I will sacrifice everything, I will leave everything." Lies! One leaves everything, one forgets everything, but never one's family.

The day after this sad departure, my mother and I took the road to la Chaumière. A very long way for her, who was as small as our charming Anaïs. I was going to take my first lesson. The way was along the rue Croix-des-Petits-Champs to the allée des Veuves. It seemed very short to me, so great was my fear. Mlle. Raucourt made me read *Emilie*, and afterwards she read it to me. She was certainly a very clever artiste, but to me, a young girl, her slightly rough and very unmusical voice was not all attractive. I believed it was necessary, if I wished to succeed, to assume that voice, and I found it an impossibility which made me despair. "Let us wait," I said to my mother, "I shall improve, perhaps."

We were given our entrée to the Comédie-Française. Ah, how happy I was! I was going to see what voices the others had. There we were both in the balcony. *Andromaque* was being played—Larrive,¹ Saint Fal,² Mlle. Fleury,³ Mlle.

¹ La Rive (Jean Maudit), born at La Rochelle, August 6, 1747; with the Montausier Company at Tours, Lyons; made his début, December 3, 1770; received on trial, January 1, 1771; left in October 1771; in provinces; re-entered, April 29, 1775;

Vanhove,⁴ since Mme. Talma. Overcome and ignorant as I was, I dare say that I was very little struck with Larrive in the beautiful part of Orestes. The public, always forgetful and ungrateful, treated unkindly a talent which but recently was surrounded with homage. Larrive, the pupil of the famous Clairon,⁵ ended badly a career which had been attended with such brilliant success. He had not the sense to retire in time. Larrive, hissed without

Sociétaire, May 18 following; pensioned, June 13, 1788; re-entered as a free actor in 1790; died at Montilignon, near Montmorency, April 30, 1827.

² Saint-Fal (Etienne Meynier), born at Paris, rue Saint-Séverin, June 10, 1752; middle-class comedy, Montausier's Company, Holland, Lyons, Brussels; made his début, July 8, 1782; Sociétaire, March 25, 1784; réunion générale, May 30, 1799; retired, April 1, 1824; died at Paris, November 22, 1835.

³ Fleury (Marie - Anne - Florence - Bernade - Nones, wife of Dr. Chevetal), born at Antwerp, December 20, 1766; début, March 23, 1784; fresh début, October 23, 1786; Sociétaire, April 5, 1791; réunion générale of 1799; retired, April 1, 1807; died at Orly, near Choisy-le-Roi, February 23, 1818.

⁴ Talma (Charlotte, called Caroline Vanhove, femme Petit, then wife of Talma (1802), and of Count de Chalôt (1828)), born at the Hague (Holland), September 10, 1771; children's parts, 1777; general reunion, May 30, 1799; pensioned, April 1, 1811; died at Paris, April 11, 1860; interred at the cemetery of Monte Parnassess (Georges Monval, etc.).

⁵ Clarion (Claire-Josèphe-Hippolyte Leris de la Tude), born at Condé sur Escaut, January 25, 1723; début at the Théâtre Italien, January 8, 1736; Opéra (March 1743); admitted, October 22, 1743; Sociétaire, November 29, 1743; retired, March 31, 1766; died at Paris, rue de Lille, the 9 Pluoise, year ix (January 29, 1803); transferred from the cemetery of Vaugirard to Père-Lachaise in 1838 (Georges Monval, etc.).

mercy, was a sad sight to see, it was useless to recall his past triumphs. "The public wants no more of you, be off with you, you, who have provided me with many happy evenings. I no longer care to hear you, I remember you no more. Be off with you, with your broken heart and humbled pride. That no longer concerns us. Be off with you." Ah, the hateful profession !

There was Mlle. Fleury as Hermione. She had a poor physique, no ability, carried herself badly, and there was something poor in all her person, but she had an agreeable voice, much heart and warmth, and spoke admirably. With all these qualities she had to struggle more than any one else : her first appearance was unfavourable ; but owing to the way she spoke one could not remain cold. She carried one away. She did not merely pretend to weep, for her tears were real. Hermione did not harmonise with these qualities, there were too many daring effects in that part for a talent more suave than impetuous. She could be the victim, but she could not make one.

I saw Mlle. Vanhove in *Andromaque*. She had a distinguished sentimental physique and a very touching voice, though perhaps a little monotonous. She certainly had talent and charm, but there were never any great effects, especially in tragedy ; the drama suited her melancholy talent better.

Saint-Phal, impassioned—very—perhaps too much so, with a jerky diction which, young as I was, seemed to me, forgive the word, a little rococo.

So much for tragedy, which I saw for the first time; a new experience was to follow. Ah! Mademoiselle Mars, how I recognised you at once! What ingenuity! How I was moved! How ravishing she seemed to me! Her eyes were so expressive and soft, her smiles so captivating. Hers was the true ingenuousness which does not lower the eyes nor assume modesty. She simply did not understand! She riveted the attention of the whole house, and aroused universal laughter by her honest and charming naïvete. Ah! my dear Mars, we shall never hear that perfection again; you have carried the secret of it to the tomb, where it will remain well sealed. You have had your detractors, admirable actress, but on leaving this earth you must have said, "Seek, and you will not find."

I am wandering among my recollections: let us return to my ignorance.

There was Michot as the peasant in *L'Épreuve*: how natural he was! He was a most remarkable actor—nature taken in the act, such easy humour, such animation! Oh, adorable talent. How he used to play Onus in *les Deux frères*, Koepp in *la Jeunesse d'Henri V*, and the old servant in *le Philosophe sans le savoir*, a part which seems a trifle, yet with him it became important! Besides, the man could make one laugh and cry at the same time. Still, he has scarcely left a memory behind him. What a strange profession it is!

Dugazon in comedy. Ah! he was a real

comedian. It was impossible not to laugh frankly: he was so amusing. Fleury¹ played Lucidor, a part which seemed a mere set-off to the other rôles, but with him it became quite important. This piece was very well mounted, I thought. And what a success the short act had! It was a running fire of applause. On leaving that evening I was mad about comedy. Tragedy! Bah! I wanted very little of it, I protest!

The second time I saw *l'Orphelin de la Chine*. It was Larrive's last performance, for this time he was frightfully treated, and even ridiculed. He lost his memory, poor fellow; he did not know what he was doing. The spectacle made one feel ill.

Mlle. Raucourt took the part of Idamé: that is maternity at its height. But Mlle. Raucourt was more herself in intellectual parts: she had the exact style. She acted well, but resembled Jasneti too much; one really did not distinguish the sex.

Finally, I saw the handsome Lafont, an actor with a great vogue, whose débuts had been so brilliant that even Talma² became uneasy. As

¹ Fleury (Abraham-Joseph Bénard), born at Chartres, October 27, 1750; Lyons Theatre (1765); made his début, March 7, 1774; returned to the Provinces; fresh début, March 20, 1778; Sociétaire, May 12 following; réunion générale, 1799; retired, April 1, 1818; died at Valençay (Loiret), March 3, 1822; interred in the cemetery of Orleans (Georges Monval, *Liste alphabétique des Sociétaires*, etc.).

² Talma (François Joseph), husband of Julie Carreau (1790) and of Caroline Vanhove (1802), born at Paris, rue des Ménes-

Orosmane he was much more the handsome man ; his features were very delicate, his nose somewhat tilted, his eyes small and black, but bright and piercing ; in fact his whole person was elegant, and his voice melodious and well-suited to love-making. Moreover, he gave us tears, enthusiasm, fervours which carried us away—very brilliant acting, but without depth and lacking in construction. It was, as it were, a display of fireworks which dazzled the eyes of the spectators, and called for enthusiastic applause.

Lafont was very much liked by women, his style of talent charmed them and with reason. He was really ravishing in *Tancred*, *The Cid*, and *Orosmane*. He was best in love scenes ; he had all the qualities, and his success in chivalrous genre was just and deserved. The emotional Mlle. Volnais¹ had just ended her débuts, having had something of a run as Palmira and Zaire. She was a pretty

trieres (parish of Saint-Nicolas-des-Champs), January 15, 1763 ; a pupil at the School of Declamation (1786) ; made his début, November 24, 1787, as Seide in *Mahomet* ; Sociétaire, April 1, 1789 ; theatre in the rue de Richelieu (April 1791) ; réunion générale of May 30, 1799 ; died at Paris, rue de la Tour-des-Dames, October 19, 1826 ; interred in the cemetery of Père-Lachaise.

¹ Volnais (Claudine-Placide Croizet-Ferreire) married Philip Roustan, of the Vaudeville (1822), born at Paris, rue Neuve-Saint-Eustache, May 4, 1786 ; made her début at Versailles, May 4, 1801 ; made her début at Paris, the seventh of the same month ; Sociétaire in 1802 ; retired, April 1, 1822 ; died at her château of Ormes-le-Guignard, near Vendôme, July 16, 1837 (Georges Monval, *Liste alphabétique des Sociétaires*, etc.).

person, with magnificent black eyes, a little short in stature, and her figure was a trifle fat, but her head was theatrical. Her voice was not the best thing about her, being toneless and hollow. She wept copiously. At that time all our leading ladies were far too emotional. It drove Talma to despair, and certainly he had right on his side.

Finally we come to Talma. At that time he was somewhat in the shade; the brilliant Lafont tormented him. The First Consul, who was very fond of Talma—he knew how to be fond—said to him: “I am not displeased, my dear fellow, about the little annoyances which the handsome Lafont causes you. It is a stimulus which you need. You were going to sleep, and he will wake you up.” Talma himself told me this anecdote.

Talma in *Iphigénie en Tauride*! I do not know if he slept, but that day his awakening was terrible. It was tragedy at its best! What emotions! and Heavens, what an expression! What a sense of fatality rested on that brow! What a talent was his, stirring one’s emotions to the deepest depths!

What terrors! What melancholy, heart-rending and genuine tears! All his face is distorted, he trembles in every fibre. He grows pale, and it is a livid and sweating pallor. Where does he get his terrible effects? It is genius and it is realism. To see Orestes is to identify oneself with him, to experience all he experiences. Ah! it isn’t diction. Can passion have diction? Can the hallucinations of

Orestes have diction ? No ; Talma is sublime. All the poetical and human passions are incarnated in this man. Ah, Talma, if you could leave your winding-sheet people would come from the four corners of the world to hear you, even from America, where they say tragedy is not loved. Poor tragedy, where art thou ? What has become of thee ?

He spoke tragedy : he did not talk it, which is different. It was not the tragedy of Marivaux : it was Corneille and Racine.

I was ill on leaving after that memorable evening. Enthused and panting, I resumed my studies with ardour, all the time saying to myself, " It is impossible. How can one reach such heights ? Let us try, though without hope. Courage, poor little girl ; the whole family counts on you. If you succeed you will make them happy. Courage, then. Yes, I will be brave ; I will work."

At last I saw Mlle. Contat, the great court lady, with her magnificent insolence, her grand manners, her domineering tone, her unstudied ease, her easy-going, unaffected ways, her sparkling comedy, the enchanting smile, the frank gaiety of the great world. Mlle. Contat ! There are all my young first impressions ! Let me tell you them, dear actors, and do not suspect me : there is no prejudice. They are just my impressions and sensations, that is all ! Girl as I was, do not think that I found everything magnificent : but I am quite convinced that what was beautiful then

would be so to-day, even to the present public, and that what was bad then would be so now. Certainly some of the actors were very ridiculous.

Molé¹ in *le Vieux Célibataire*, and Mlle. Contat: it was marvellous. Fleury so witty and so well bred in his impertinences, his bantering ways and mocking laugh. Then Dugazon, Dazincourt,² and Mlle. Devienne,³ who was a soubrette to the life, the sly cat, so familiar with her mistress, but always perfumed and circumspect. The get-up for soubrettes was in those days charming, simple and coquettish. Always a pretty bonnet, sleeves to the elbow, the bosom covered with a lace handkerchief, which allowed everything to be guessed at but nothing to be seen, an arrangement which was not lacking in charm; then there were embroidered aprons, and

¹ Molé (François-René), born at Paris, in the City, rue Saint-Louis, November 24, 1734; made his début, October 7, 1754; Lyons, Toulouse, Marseilles; fresh début, January 28, 1760; Sociétaire, March 30, 1761; left, September 1, 1791; Member of the Institute, 1795; réunion générale of 1799; died at Paris, 1 rue Corneille, the 20th Frimaire, year xi (December 11, 1802); interred on his property at Antony (Seine).

² Dazincourt (Joseph-J.-B.-Albony), born at Marseilles, December 11, 1747; at Brussels, 1772; made his début, November 21, 1776; Sociétaire, March 23, 1778; died at Paris, 24 rue de Richelieu, March 28, 1809; buried in the cemetery of Montmaitre.

³ Devienne (Jeanne-Françoise-Sophie Thérénin), wife of Gérardau (1809), born at Lyons, June 21, 1763; made her début, April 7, 1785; received the 12th of November following; at the Montansier and Feydeau theatres; réunion générale of 1799; retired, April 1, 1813; died at Paris, November 20, 1841 (Georges Monval, etc.).

always gloves. The whole get-up was most elegant, I assure you.

* * * * *

I pursued my studies with zeal ; people began to notice me. When I reached my modest place in the balcony there was a slight movement in the house which was quite disconcerting. “It is Mlle. Raucourt’s pupil ; she is giving her lessons to replace her.” “Really she is very young.” Then all glasses were directed on me. I was as red as a cherry, and I scarcely dared move. Later on they used to applaud me. When I took my place the whole audience stood up. At this period the theatre was much to the fore, and especially the Théâtre-Français, which the Emperor liked so much, and visited so often. Consequently the début of a pupil of Mlle. Raucourt was an event. Hearing the applause I thought I was being laughed at. I was ashamed, and the tears stood in my eyes. “Mamma, is there anything ridiculous about me ?” “No, no ; just bow !” Ah, really, I was on the rack.

Naturally I had to be present at Mlle. Raucourt’s performances, and after the tragedy appear in her dressing-room ; that was the etiquette of the period. There was much respect and deference for great talent. But it was neither respect nor deference that guided me—it was more than that. Gratitude imposed a duty on me which I joyfully performed. There was always a good number in the dressing-room. I had to be presented to each person. I

was very timid. "Come, child, show yourself. Take off that stupid hat that you may be seen."

Before my débuts I had had a severe illness, which had caused the loss of my hair; so my head had to be shaved! Mlle. Raucourt conceived the frightful fancy of showing me in that condition; she was amused at my shame, and thought short hair suited me . . . I was a fright. Ah, how I cursed her admiration for my shaven pate!

Good Mlle. Raucourt was too lazy for lessons, and later on I understood the reason. In Paris, it was a very difficult thing to dedicate to me a peaceful hour. Ten, twenty times interruptions came: Monseigneur Prince d'Hénin, Mme. de Talleyrand, Mme. Tallien, and so on and so forth, without end. "Prince, you must listen to my pupil. My child, stand over there and recite nicely." The child was in a very bad temper, and trembled like a leaf; but she had to obey.

We were very, very poor. My father's affairs were progressing badly at Amiens. My brother had come to us in Paris to take lessons from Kreutzer. He got the children of the Dutch Ambassador as pupils. Poor brother, he gave us nearly all he gained. My father could hardly send us any money: he dispatched boxes of vegetables and clothes. My nurse went to wash our linen at the riverside. Ah, a charming yet cruel time! My studies proceeded slowly. Mlle. Raucourt, occupied with her theatre, her endless visits and other

distractions, was little disposed to bore herself with her pupil. Within two hours of Orleans she had a charming abode, la Chapelle, which she had just acquired. She was mad about it, and repaired there too frequently for my studies. Mme. de Ponty, who lived with her, was an excellent person, who took a serious interest in me, and grumbled and was displeased with my professor's laziness. "Fanny, what can you be thinking of? The poor child will never make her *début* in the way you are going on. We must put an end to it. I don't like the country, but out of friendship for Mme. George and the little one I have decided to leave for la Chapelle, and I shall bring them with me. There, at least, we shall keep you, and we shall accept no more of your bad excuses." The dear little woman sacrificed herself for us.

Mme. de Ponty was a very distinguished person, the daughter of a former maid-of-honour to Marie Antoinette. The Revolution ruined her completely. She was imprisoned, and made the acquaintance of Mlle. Raucourt in prison, where also were Mlle. Contat and Mlle. Vanhove. An intimate friendship arose between Mlle. Raucourt and Mme. de Ponty, who was a little lady of studied elegance, witty and gracious, with a great ascendancy over Mlle. Raucourt, who spoiled her like a child.

Mme. de Ponty had a very resolute character. The frail little woman loved very much when she loved at all, and defended her friends when they were attacked. She had a noble and courageous

character, and was a loyal and trustworthy woman. Her tastes were little in agreement with the existence she had accepted; she had lost everything and—necessity knows no law. How could she satisfy her tastes as a great lady without the friendly hand which Mlle. Raucourt had offered her? All this is sad and distressing. Let us pass on.

At last we set out for Orleans. Mlle. Raucourt spent the whole day in the park with her flowers. She grafted perfectly, but took too long about it. Did the lessons come? Not at all. The grumbling began again. She was very angry, but gave in. Several good lessons followed—Emilie from *Cinna*, Aménaïde from *Tancrède*, Idamé from *l'Orphelin de la Chine*, *Phèdre*, *Didon*.

A fortnight later, Lafont, the handsome Lafont, came to Orleans to give some performances there with Mlle. Raucourt. Lafont, as you can well imagine, came every day to dine at Mlle. Raucourt's and spend all his free evenings. He was very amiable and gay, and was very entertaining in company. The handsome Lafont made love to me; he assumed the sentimental. There was a charming wood, and he managed to separate me from the company. I let myself be led, I frankly confess. We stopped one day in front of a fine large stone forming a kind of rock. There he made me an honest proposal, swearing that he would do everything to obtain me in marriage. "I will take an oath," he said, as if he were speaking to

Zaïre, "before this rock, which we will call the rock of Ariadne."

"You frighten me, Monsieur Lafont, since it was on a rock that Ariadne died of grief on being abandoned by Theseus."

"My dear little friend, that is very different. Theseus was a libertine, but Lafont is an honest man."

That was a piece of buffoonery, and we laughed together over it. We stayed a little too long, as it proved: the company had regained the house, the dinner-bell was ringing, and we started to run. They were at table—just imagine! I was very silly and very red. My mother frowned horribly. Mlle. Raucourt was cold to Lafont, and blamed him for making me late. "My dear comrade, I hope this will not happen again." It was a sad dinner. There were some excellent dishes, but I ate nothing at all, so frightened was I of finding myself alone with my mother, who was very strict. Good little Madame de Ponty laughed, doing all she could to restore a little life into the conversation. In the evening, games were played, and some visitors came: the misadventure was forgotten in giving way to the happiest laughter in the world. My little mother was begged to forgive my giddiness. Lafont pursued his idea of marriage. But my charming Gascon did not at all want to be precipitate, he would wait for my débuts. A prudent fellow for a son-in-law, "he wished to give me time," he said,

“for reflection.” He did well, my *Orosmane of the Midi*: I reflected and became convinced that marriage was not at all to my taste. Even then I had an independent character. Poor Lafont, with his bourgeois habits, what would he have done with me, and, good Heavens! what should I have made of him? “The knight with the long face,” I think.

We received visits from Paris, and time was spent in making up water-parties, and in visiting the beautiful properties, so famous on the banks of the Loiret—La Source, La Fontaine—truly admirable places.

We were present at Lafont’s and Raucourt’s performances at Orleans. On the days when there were no performances, we played at puss-in-the-corner in the courtyard. Mlle. Raucourt delighted in these frolics. She said good-bye to ceremony, and was as merry and childish as I. She entered into the game with delightful good-nature and animation. She was an extremely witty woman, she was so amusing when she imitated her world. Sometimes she had fancies I did not care for at all. For example, she loved shooting passionately. She took her gun and dog and game-bag, and set off in a little white skirt, which reached just to the knees. She was the classical Diana, with limbs as beautiful as hers, and long, delicate and charming feet. There she was, shooting in her park under the full sun. Once, she said to me, “Come with me: you will see how you will enjoy

yourself." Never having had martial tastes (I had put down "masculine" but the word seemed too strong), I trembled all over.

"No, please don't take me. I should be dreadfully afraid, I know quite well. I don't like shooting."

"Coward!"

"Madame, leave me with mamma and Madame de Ponty: I will study; I like that better."

"Come now, you mustn't be so cowardly. If you are so frightened, how will you make your *début* before a full house?"

"Madame, that house will not be composed of rabbits, and I shall not be afraid of guns."

(All this is true though very childish, but you asked me to put down all my little silly ways, and I will not shirk it.)

So I followed the implacable Diana. At each shot I fell to the ground with the poor little rabbits. For did not the beautiful huntress tell me, when she thought she had taken good aim, to run after *the poor little* beast and bring it back to her?

"As for that, madame, no. I revolt; I can't obey you; I shall not come back. You will wait a long time for your rabbit. I shall be found dead first." She burst into laughter. Mlle. Raucourt was really kind. All these recollections cannot interest any one, I know quite well, but my heart rejoices to recall them. How happy one is at fourteen! Everything seems true to you, you see everything at its best; you believe in

friendship, in devotion, in love! I believed in my handsome Lafont's love, who seemed perfect to me. When he spoke to me, when during our evening game my hand met his, my blood rushed back to my heart, I ceased to breathe. Later on one sees that all is false and everything calculation; friendship is very rare, devotion still rarer; oh, yes, very much rarer. Love, certainly, gives you some illusions, makes you live; it tortures you, often bruises your heart, but it does animate you. That is something! It is impossible to live in a dead calm, but I think there is something really genuine—that is *maternal love*. Dear Lafont, no more walks, no more chats: after glances and deep sighs, and then the hope which gives life!

To utilise the evenings, Mlle. Raucourt thought of making me rehearse in costume. She had several faded costumes at the bottom of an old case, and a foil diadem. So there I was disguised as Hermione, Cornelia, whatever you like. I was very proud of all those fine feathers. All the notabilities of Orleans were invited, the clever people of the county, and the poets of the neighbourhood. I have no need to tell you of the kindness with which I was surrounded. Out of courtesy to the professor and indulgence to me, praises were lavished on me. "What! She is only fourteen, and she is going to play Clytemnestra! She is a prodigy!"

My professor was flattered by the prediction of a great success for her pupil. This prophecy aroused

Mlle. Raucourt at last. She felt that she must busy herself with me: her *amour propre* was at stake, so lessons were not lacking. When I had to recite I was terribly afraid; I neither slept nor ate, my mouth was dry, and I had all the evidences of fear. "Bah," I was told, "you are not truthful, when you tell us of your fears: beginners fear nothing. They scarcely understand what they are taught: they are little parrots." Thanks! Then one must be stupid to dare! Well, madame, mamma will tell you that at five years old I trembled like a leaf, so much so that she was forced to remain near me behind the scenes, moistening my lips with sugared water. However, once before the public I was a different girl; the applause intoxicated me and I thought of nothing but my part. Besides, I have always been very timid. How many times, before coming on the stage, feeling myself paralysed with fear, I have prayed God to send me an accident which might prevent me going on.

An accident! in truth, I longed for death. How indulgent the public would be if it could guess what was passing in the heart and head of an artiste at the moment of battle. Yes, it is an assault; it needs courage and it is generally believed to be an amusing calling. What a deep error! It is a profession which works upon the emotions, breaking you, attacking your nerves and rending you asunder. How could it be otherwise? The existence of an actor is quite different to that of the world; in our health most particularly. We

cannot have habits. If you play you must dine at three o'clock and pick your food! Sup, then, which you do not do when you are resting. Lunch, then, at ten o'clock. How the stomach accommodates itself to all these changes! Do you wish to take advantage of the beautiful sun and go for a walk, like everybody else? No; you must dine, be at your dressing-room at five o'clock, and in the place of the sun be smothered by the heat of lamps. Are you in a good temper? Are you gay at heart? Do you wish to laugh? The three knocks are heard. Quickly assume your visage of *Lucrèce Borgia* or *Cleopatra*, neither of which is more amusing than the other.

And the artistes of the gay sort. They have their troubles, too. I believe it is much harder to make people laugh when the heart is wounded than to make them cry when one desires to laugh. Dear public! Do not envy our lot: it is slavery.

Let us return to Orleans, to leave it. Lafont left after the performances, and Mlle. Raucourt, to her great regret, was obliged to quit her adored Chapelle.

So here we are at Paris; we in the rue des Colonnes, Mlle. Raucourt, rue Thibaut, in the same house where Mme. Dugazon lived. The débuts were drawing near. Mlle. Duchesnois,¹ a pupil of Legouvè, a protégée of Mme. de

¹ Duchesnois (Catherine-Joséphine Rafuin), born at Siant-Saulnes, near Valenciennes (Nord), June 5, 1777; made her début at Versailles, July 12; at Paris, August 3, 1803;

Montesson and the General de Valence, who was working to get her passed first; but Mlle. Raucourt had been promised by the Minister of the Interior that I should pass before the other aspirants. I worked every day. We were reaching the end of our little miseries. A great deal of interest was taken in us. My little sister was entered at the dancing-school of the Opéra, managed by M. Lebel, under the supervision of M. Gardel. My brother Charles was admitted as second violin to the orchestra of the Théâtre-Feydeau, owing to the influence of his master, the good Kreutzer.

All was bustle and excitement. Mlle. Raucourt herself felt that she must be up and doing. She was received very often by Mme. Bonaparte, the wife of the First Consul. We set off for Saint-Cloud, and Mlle. Raucourt was instantly admitted. I saw the beautiful and gracious Joséphine for the first time. She came towards us with that smile which at once attaches you to her. Her eyes were so sweet and attractive; she was so kind. She placed you at your ease, but with that distinction and elegant simplicity which belonged only to her. There was in all her person a suavity which magnetised you. It was impossible not to bow before that mysterious influence, that sweet charm.

Sociétaire, March 17, 1804; pensioned, November 1829; died at Paris, rue de la Rouchefoucauld, January 7 to 8, 1835; interred at Père-Lachaise, avenue des Acacias (monument Lemaire) (Georges Monval, etc.).

One loved her before she spoke ; one felt that she brought happiness with her.

She asked Mlle. Raucourt to allow me to say some lines. I recited a scene from *Idamé*, which caused Mme. Bonaparte to weep ; a maternal scene could not fail of its effect on Joséphine's heart—for she was such a good mother. She wished to embrace me, with large, beautiful tears still in her eyes. “ My child, your talent will be maternity. You have moved my heart.” We left enchanted. “ Good-bye, dear Raucourt ; I hope to see you soon. Bring back this little rogue who has made me weep.”

(All that is historical. You have the power of dilating upon such things, but I am too stupid to turn them to account.)

Mlle. Raucourt profited by her delight to make a little trip to la Chapelle. To visit her trees and grafts is more important than to guard against all that might be done in her absence. I shall certainly never make my début. That which we feared actually happened. An order was obtained for the début of Mlle. Duchesnois. “ All the better,” I said to Mme. de Ponty, “ and quite right, too. It is natural, they think, that Mlle. Raucourt doesn't care, since she goes away just at the time when her presence is most necessary ! ” But what a fuss there was on Mlle. Raucourt's return. “ You see, Fanny, what is happening, thanks to your negligence and your love for your trees. An injustice is being done you. It is an

act of infamy and treachery, a personal insult which is being flung in your face. You have only got your deserts." Mlle. Raucourt was piqued in her *amour propre*; she who was so imperious. Her friends hasten to her. "Don't allow this injustice, Fanny; it is really an impertinence." One would have thought that Paris was convulsed. After all, I did not mind coming out second. I laughed in my sleeve at all this chatter, and at heart (it was naughty, if you like) I was not very sorry to see Mlle. Raucourt annoyed to this small extent. For why does she go to la Chapelle? All these comings and goings, all this uproar and continual hubbub finished by tiring me out; and at the end of those stormy days I was happy to return with my little mother to the rue des Colonnes, to my poor little room, where I could play with my little sister.

Next day Mlle. Raucourt told me to make my toilette; that she would come to fetch me at mid-day to go to Saint-Cloud. My toilette! A white muslin dress of girlish fashion; my hair waved *à la Titus*; bare arms, long grey gloves, a little blue sash: that was my best apparel! The excellent and charming Mme. Bonaparte listened to all that Mlle. Raucourt told her about her disappointment with indulgent patience. "Well, my dear Fanny" (she, too, called her by her Christian name), "don't disturb yourself so; you will be ill, my dear. Come, let us talk a little and be calm. What harm can the débuts of Mlle. Duchesnois do to this charming

child? The lady is twenty-eight, they say. She is made; she must already be all she ever will be. What comparison can be established between a woman of twenty-eight and a child of fourteen? None; be reasonable then. And you, dear child, what do you think about it? You are not so upset as your professor, are you?" She embraced me with such kindness that I began to cry like a stupid. How kind she was. "Ah, see, she is crying! There, since it is such a great mortification, since you absolutely consider that she should make her *début* first, I will beg the First Consul to come to me. He will decide."

You can tell the fear which ran away with me to such an extent that I dared cry, "Oh no, madame, please don't send for him. I much prefer to remain with you quite alone, you are so kind, and I am not afraid of you. Besides, madame, I should bungle my business; I should be like an idiot before him. Then, as a matter of fact, it is all the same to me to make my *début* after that lady. That will make me work with more ardour."

"Do you consent, madame?" I said to Mlle. Raucourt. "It is not necessary to bother him, nor madame either, who is so kind."

Joséphine began to laugh, but good-naturedly. Taking me in her arms, she said—

"You see, Fanny, she is more reasonable than we are. We must do as she says; that will bring her good luck." (It is you, madame, who will

bring me good luck.) “Then we shall all be there to applaud our little protégée.”

(Historical. Not a word more, not a word less.)

At last I am in the carriage, opposite Mlle. Raucourt.

She made a sour face. “Little idiot, you’ve made a mess of it ; the Consul would have given the order. The good Joséphine did not insist when she saw you so stupid, and I yielded. Come, now, no more reproaches, and take your courage in both hands.”

And now all sorts of visits followed in quick succession.

“Come, we are going to visit Mlle. Clairon. She brought me out, and although she has been very nasty to me, I can’t get out of taking you to her. I owe her that deference.”

(We were very polite in those days !)

Mlle. Clairon received us very coldly. She was a small woman with glacial manners and not a little impertinence. She was most disdainful ; Mlle. Raucourt kissed her hand, which she scarcely held out ; her glance was very important, but there was not the least good-nature in it. She was all pride, that woman ! Seated in a great arm-chair à la Voltaire, she did not in the least attempt to rise, greeting us distantly. She made me feel quite cold, and I wished myself far away.

“My dear Madame Clairon, permit me to present my pupil.”

“Ah, ah ! You are training a pupil ! For what parts ?”

“At first she is to play the parts of great princesses, and then of queens.”

“Ah, you are aiming pretty high. So you are training a pupil to succeed you. Well, I only hope she will give you more satisfaction than you ever gave me.”

This apostrophe displeased Mlle. Raucourt.

“But, madame, be so good as to consult your recollection; if I have ceased to pay my respects to you, it is because you have wished it.”

“Ah! bah! Pupils are always ungrateful, except, however, the good Larrive, who has never ceased to pay me homage.”

Mlle. Raucourt replied maliciously—

“You treated him so particularly well, that he would have been doubly ungrateful to forget.”

The Clairon almost blushed. I say almost, for she was frightfully pale.

“Come, very well! Child, recite something to me.”

A choking seized me. I could never say anything before that face, which looked at me without the least expression of good-nature. Mlle. Raucourt saw quite well the little desire I had to please that cold face, and she herself made haste to retire.

“She is very husky, dear Mademoiselle Clairon, and to-day you could only judge her unfavourably.”

“As you please.”

“If you permit, I will bring her again.”

The great Mlle. Clairon made no reply, and we left.

“She is pleasant, that woman! What do you say?”

“I say she makes me feel as if icicles were being put down my back. I don’t like that woman at all.”

“Let us go to the good Dumesnil.”¹

Ah, she was different! We entered a small room on the ground floor in the courtyard of an old convent, rue des Filles-Saint-Thomas. There were some dwellings there belonging to the Government, where artistes obtained lodgings for nothing. This great artiste obtained this miserable favour. An old servant announced us. La Dumesnil was lying down (for several years she had been unable to get up) surrounded by chickens. I still see her, such an impression did she make on me, sitting up in bed—in a nightdress of blue silk, with a little cap surmounted with a knot of blue ribbon.

“Ah, dear Fanny, how glad I am to see you! Come and embrace your old Dumesnil. Who is the pretty child you have brought? Come, my daughter, and embrace old Dumesnil as well.”

I devoured her with my eyes with incredible

¹ Dumesnil (Marie-Françoise Marchand), born at Paris, rue des Marais, January 2, 1713; Strasburg (1733); made her début, April 6, 1737; received, October 8 following; Sociétaire, February 2, 1738; retired, March 31, 1776; died at Paris, 24 rue et barrière Blanche, 1 Ventôse, year x (February 20, 1803) (Georges Monval, *Liste alphabétique*, etc.).

curiosity. She had such an expressive physiognomy, and the eye and the glance of an eagle. I was stupefied.

"Tell me, Fanny, is this your pupil you have brought?"

"Yes, good Dumesnil."

"And when is she going to make her début?"

"Very soon, dear."

"Ah, that's good. In what part?"

"Clytemnestra."

She turned to me as if she were gazing at Eriphile. She was magnificent.

"Oh! oh! At her age! That's bold, you know, Fanny!"

"No, dear friend; this little madcap has quite a maternal heart."

"So much the better; it is sentiment which attracts men as well as women. I will recite the first scene. Would you like me to, Fanny?"

"Would I like you to? Are you laughing at me? What I desire, dear Dumesnil, is that she may be able to remember what she is going to hear."

I heard a thunderous voice proceed from that thin little body, with a terse utterance, a realism almost familiar, but nevertheless dignified. At the verse—

"Et de ne voir en lui que le dernier des hommes,"—

Achilles appeared quite insignificant. Her glance on Eriphile caused the woman to shrink. One saw

her bow herself almost to the ground beneath the penetrating glance. And in the line—

“ Et ce n'est pas Chalchas que vous cherchez,”—

every monosyllable had its value. I was enthralled and rooted in my place. I said in a low voice, “ Ah, the immense woman ! What realism ! They are not verses which she repeats ! No ! it is an outraged mother, humiliated in her child. It is a woman who will very certainly avenge herself one day.”

“ Fanny, how did la Clairon receive you ? ”

“ You ask me ? Very badly.”

She began to laugh.

“ Ah, really ! So poor dear Clairon continues to play the queen ? She is always stiff and pedantic, isn't she ? That's all very well sometimes ; but you know as well as I that such a high-flown, bombastic style does not appeal to the masses nor reach the heart of the public. Do you say that this child has feeling ? ”

“ I told you so, especially in maternity.”

“ Bravo ! bravo ! It is the most sympathetic sentiment. Recite to me, child, the scene from *Idamé*, where they wish to take away her child.”

I repeated it at once without fear, but with the emotion she had given me.

“ Very good, very good, little one ! Dear me ! See how my eyes are moist. You are right, the little one has maternal heart-strings.”

“ But, Madame Dumesnil, I am just as fond of love.”

“Heavens ! I believe so. She is right ! At your age, eh ! I too liked love !”

“Besides, madame, for maternal love it is very necessary to know the other a little.”

“Which love part do you like ?”

“Why, Aménaïde.”

“Yes, that is love, to be sure, but love unmixed with any other feeling. It is Hermione that you must study : that is love mingled with jealousy. There we have passion at its best. But it is almost an impossible part to play—isn’t it, Raucourt ? First, Hermione in love with all her heart ; then, made fierce by wounded pride. The woman employs every means, irony stifled by the tears which she will not allow to flow. It is not a cutting and passionate irony like Roxane’s. No, they are tears which she suppresses, and which fall back in her throat. It is wrong to wish to express a dry bitterness there. Clairon knew it, but she has no feelings. Then there is declamation to produce great effects. See, little one, you must know what to sacrifice, to cut, so as to reach unexpected effects. Above all, don’t listen to authors ; *they* want to lose nothing.”

“But, madame, is Hermione then so very difficult ?”

“Ask your professor what is included in that great character. Anger, love, coquetry, and a disdainful coldness before the beautiful and touching Andromache—that classic sorrow ; one only whines, but never represents it. The uncertainty, outraged

amour propre, the insults which she throws in the face of the fatalist figure called Orestes ! Two women are really needed to play that part. You have the beauty, little one, which is needed for Hermione, seek and find all the qualities. If you can unite them in yourself alone, you will become greater than we. If I am still alive, Fanny, come with her to tell me about her débuts. She interests me for herself and for you. Good-bye, children ; I am tired. The wretched theatre still upsets me when I speak of it ; it rouses me in spite of myself from my bed of repose, where I wish to end my days peacefully with my old servant and my chickens. Embrace me, both of you, and good luck !”

I retired with little desire for Hermione. Dumesnil’s talk about that personage would not leave my thoughts. I was almost paralysed when confronted with the part. I have played it often with Talma, and have always found myself wanting in it, in spite of the applause of a too indulgent public. La Dumesnil kept appearing like a ghost, saying in my ear, “ Ha ! I told you so, little one !”

On leaving Mlle. Dumesnil, Mlle. Raucourt, who liked to torment me with a thousand questions, often very embarrassing for my inexperience and perfect ignorance of everything, tried to find out if I had any intelligence or ideas.

“ What do you think of the two women ? ”

“ I, madame ? I dare not say what I think ; you would laugh at me.”

“No, not at all. Speak freely to me. I question you for your good ; do a little by yourself.”

“Well, since you wish it. Mlle. Clairon does not appeal to me in the least. She seemed to me too much on her dignity. She has, I believe, nothing but dryness in her heart. Her insolent regard did not even impose on me, a little girl. She has, doubtless, much talent, but perhaps it is too deep and calculated. Isn't it true, madame, that one can be too deep? Then there is no attraction, no spontaneity, nothing natural. I am very bold to express my opinion like this, I who know nothing. But still, why did Dumesnil leave such emotion in my heart? Ah, how true and natural she was! She played Cleopatra and Mérope; those two parts are so different; Mérope, all heart for her son; Cleopatra, cruel, killing him with her own royal hands. What a subtle talent that immense actress must have had! You told me how Voltaire, listening to her performance of Mérope, cried out in his enthusiasm, ‘I did not create anything as fine as that. This sublime enchantress melts me to tears. Ah, my dear Dumesnil, you are the real creator of Mérope. Wherever in the depth of your heart do you find those effects which bewitch all who hear you? How beautiful, how pathetic you are!’ Then as Cleopatra, that mother so coldly cruel. What a different tale! You told me how in the fifth act, at the moment when Antiochus is in doubt, with a doubt too grievous for his tender heart, as to which of the women he loves could

have poured out the poison, one of the spectators, penetrated by such a dramatic situation and having followed all Cleopatra's movements, signals to Antiochus, 'It is she, that one there,' giving her a blow on the back in his great indignation. You also told me how the house shook with applause, and the Dumesnil remained impassive. She did not seem to perceive what was happening, nor to have felt the blow which the soldier had given her. Genius can go no further."

Mlle. Raucourt listened to me quite seriously.

"I see, dear child, you will do something. You are a thorough child, and you love playing pranks, but you do think and observe. That is well."

I thought I should work without ceasing. The moment of my débuts approached. But it was not to be so. There were incessant visits; the Ministers came, then all the family of the First Consul; Lucien, who, like the First Consul, only loved tragedy; the eminent Mme. Bacciochi, a thin and delicate woman, who was very much in the Emperor's confidence. We often lunched at her house with the Emperor's mother and Lucien. Then afterwards I had to recite. Lucien used to take part in the performance, giving me my cues and frequently playing whole scenes by himself.

The Emperor's mother amused herself very much with these recitations. She was severe in appearance but noble and very beautiful, as well as good and indulgent. I was the protégée

of all that great family. Mme. Bacciochi had a great affection for me, and sent for me nearly every morning, and, although a great sufferer, made me recite. When I was alone with her she had fits of vomiting, which made her suffer, and very often during one of these rehearsals she was interrupted: "Pass me the basin quickly; it will be nothing." Then, as a matter of fact, we started again with renewed ardour. What a courageous and charming woman!

Queen Hortense too, who liked Mlle. Raucourt, often received us at that time. She lived in a mansion in the rue de la Victoire. Eugène Beauharnais, who was everything that is delightful, was nearly always with his sister. Queen Hortense was very beautiful: she had the most lovely eyes in the world, and an angelic sweetness, charming hair, the figure of a nymph, a magnificent colouring, her complexion was fresh and smooth, and white as a swan. (*Dear Valmore, you know that only you can paint her portrait, with the poetical expressions which are yours alone.*) She had the exquisite kindness of allowing me to recite to her.

One day when I was really fatigued and the perspiration was pouring from my forehead, she cried, "Poor child, I don't want her to go away in that state: she will be ill. Let us wrap her in this shawl," and, in spite of myself and Mlle. Raucourt, she placed round me a large cashmere shawl which she had on her own beautiful shoulders.

"I will return it to you to-day."

“Not at all. She shall keep it in remembrance of me.”

Yes, I kept it, good and beautiful Queen Hortense. I shall always keep it; to me it is a relic. I would sooner die of hunger than part with it.

All these remembrances are very dear and precious to me, and I have the sweet consolation of having never varied in my affections. I am poor: what does it matter? I think I am rich in heart and especially in my devotion for that *immense* family which stretched out its hand to me in my youth. I shall have the honour of dying with my first sentiments. Perhaps I shall not leave enough money to bury me. It is quite possible; such things have happened. I was never made to be a landed proprietor. I shall have a few spadefuls of earth and a few flowers from my friends. What more does one want?

The excitement, the continual comings and goings, the new world in which I moved, the exhibition of my person in my own interest, for the sake of gaining popularity, all these things caused so many different emotions that I was thoroughly exhausted. Every evening my heart beat so violently that it seemed to be bursting through my bosom. I was only too glad to get home to my little mother.

“Are you happy?”

“Indeed, no; all this bores me. I preferred playing my *Petite Laitière* and *Paul et Virginie* better. I

was loved at Amiens. How do I know what will become of me? Perhaps I shall be stifled in those great dresses. Then one wants so many things for tragedy. Then there is that Mlle. Duchesnois who is making her *début* before me. Then there is Mlle. Raucourt who everlastingly makes me tear about with her in her carriage. It is true that does not fatigue my limbs, but the lessons are very rare. See, little mother, I regret Amiens, our room, my piano, my operas. I regret it even to the little household duties which I was made to do, when I laid the cloth and nurse scolded me. ‘Hurry, Mimi, M. George is coming and you will be late.’ Ah, how nice it was! Then there was my loto, when you let me play it with you. How cross I was when I lost. And M. Baudry! Do you remember how furious he was when he called the numbers. Scarcely were they in his fingers when I named them. ‘This little girl is intolerable. Forbid her, Madame George, to be so dishonest. You are bringing her up very badly!’ You think mamma will scold me, but really you see you are amusing her. Will she or papa scold me! They are too good for that, they love me too much. Ah, yes, I weep to think that I shall see no more of that. Stop, to-morrow we are again going to pass the evening at M. Roederer’s, at the Jardin des Plantes; how amusing that will be!”

(Dear friend Valmore, you must inquire what Roederer was, and what his position was at that time.)

“Why did Mlle. Raucourt come to Amiens. What possessed my father to want to see me attired in a diadem. He would not give me to Molé, or to Mme. Dugazon, and yet he has given me to tragedy. That is odd !”

“There, Mimi, stop. It was for your happiness that we made the journey, that I separated from your father and gave up my position at my age. You have a good heart, you love us : don’t forget. Be reasonable and kiss your little mother.”

The débuts of Mlle. Duchesnois drew near, and mine were in preparation. Prince d’Hénin, who was very fond of Mlle. Raucourt and saw her very often, had just made me a present of a most beautiful tiger-skin for my part of Didon. At that time, Didon was played in the costume of a huntress, like the classic Diana with a bow and quiver, which was really quite beautiful. I began to find the details of attire very amusing. Trying on all the beautiful dresses made me forget the little dairy-maid and the loto.

However, the Chinese costume of Idamé suited me very badly. All my hair was dressed high on the head, a great bird of paradise (very rare) which the Empress-mother had given me, was perched on the top of my coiffure, and the magnificent feathers fell down my shoulders. The costume had the appearance of a big sack. What a fright ! Everybody said it suited me very well, and that I was superb with a plain forehead. I was not of that opinion. I thought myself very ugly and

had a dispute with Dublin, who was the designer of the Théâtre-Français, a man of wit, of talent even, but very headstrong as to the exactness of his costumes : “ What ! you want to put me into that sack thing, and hide my arms, neck and chest, and you think I would dare to appear like that ! Why, I should be a laughing-stock ! ”

“ And as for me,” said the good Vanhove, who was playing Yamti, “ what do you think, my child, he wants to do with me. He sews me all up, do you understand ? Not even a poor little place to put my snuff-box, and monsieur knows how fond I am of my snuff : but he likes to annoy me. You are a revolutionary, Monsieur Dublin.”

You can imagine the shouts of laughter. There was at that time a gaiety without pedantry. There was good comradeship, and every one knew his worth—a charming equality reigned. Talma and Monvel¹ “thou’d” Dublin, who “thou’d” them in turn ; as did even a certain Marchand, famous for his nose without end and for the smallest and meanest figure in the world ; his whole wretched person disappeared beneath his gigantic nose. The poor devil only did the announcements, but he put an altogether comic importance into it. It was he who

¹ Monvel (Jacques-Marie Boutet), born at Luneville, March 25, 1745 ; made his début, April 28, 1770 ; received, April 1, 1772 ; left, July 1, 1781 ; reader to the King of Sweden and manager of the French troupe at Stockholm Theatre in the rue Richelieu, 1791 ; member of the Institute, 1795 ; General Congress, 1799 ; retired, March 1, 1806 ; died at Paris, February 13, 1812 (Georges Monval, etc.).

was charged with the duty of bringing the chairs on to the stage in Trissotin's scene in *Femmes Savantes*, and of letting himself fall while carrying a chair. He begged Talma, Michaud, and all who were there to come and see him. When the effect had been great he was generally congratulated.

"Really, Talma, aren't you flattering me? Were you pleased? Tell the management, then. You really see that it is an injustice to keep me back in my career."

Talma was naive, and quite a big child, to amuse himself with all these pleasantries.

This was the Talma whose glance caused trembling and agitation in all the audience, but who in private life was gentle, simple and peaceful.

We never bothered about money and only dreamed of success. We were real artistes.

Among these simple artistes without pride there was, however, one whose pride was often impertinent. Monvel told me how one day, at a full meeting, the very imperial Clairon, who regarded her comrades as vassals, said—

"You must know, messieurs, that when I play two or three times, I keep you for a whole month."

"Dear Mademoiselle Clairon," replied Molé, making the bow of a marquis, "that is why I am so thin."

Mlle. Contat had her share of arrogance, but she was very witty and charming when she wished to be so, but it was a fancy she rarely had. One only approached her if she allowed it. A great talent!

A great woman ! She had an enchanting head and the most beautiful black eyes you could imagine ; her glance was piercing, her mouth smiling and derisive. Her talent was large and free ; the grand manners of the court, head high in the air. She acted for pleasure.

One ought never to see her in sentimental parts, for it was impossible to throw the least melancholy into that physiognomy. The guilty mother, the jealous wife—ah, it was no longer Mlle. Contat ! Her voice then became shrill, her tears were repressed. It was enough to make one suffer. But she made up for it when she reappeared by making fun of every one. Once in the *Comédie des Femmes*, where she was irresistibly funny with Fleury, who yielded nothing to her in persiflage, in a certain scene with him in which she wished to assume a sentimental tone, he said to her, “ Let us leave tragedy alone ; you have too much charm in playing comedy.”

They were applauded ten times without the help of *claqueurs*. The latter met with little favour ; indeed, they were often shown the door. Perhaps it was as well.

The theatre at that time was quite different. There was a certain amount of petty intrigue to be put up with, but that went on without too much scandal. Theatrical jealousies existed and always will exist, but the emulation had something more noble about it : there was a desire to do better than one's predecessor, and we worked seriously.

The public then was very enthusiastic and very strict, so one had to be always on one's guard. Knowing that negligence would soon be punished, we strove to become true artistes. It was an art, and not a trade. It is nice to be a real artiste, and not dream of the future. To be preoccupied with the future is such a sad, parsimonious business. Commercial ideas do not go with the arts: we want exaltation and sublimity. Without that perpetual fever, how could one have the courage to appear before a public which is going to watch you, wait on you, which magnetises you, and must be magnetised to place you in sympathy with it? When you have obtained during your performance an enthusiastic success, you return to your dressing-room quite panting and feverish, to be surrounded with homage. Do you think of keeping accounts? In sooth, little does it matter to you. You pay—when you can—your cook without troubling yourself if he cheats you of a few carrots. How can you be an artiste if you enter into such details? The famous comedian, Baron, once said, "Actors should be reared on the laps of queens!" He was quite right, there is no sordid calculation there.

And now we come to the débuts of Mlle. Duchesnois. She made her début at Versailles. It was the custom. The Théâtre-Français was not turned into a school of mutual instruction, a grotesque exhibition of people, men and women, saying to themselves on waking, "I want to

play tragedy; that genre amuses me. I shall make my début at the Théâtre-Français; if I do not succeed—well, I shall go on to Quimper-Corentin.”

(Valmore—I do not know in what part Duchesnois appeared; I think it was Didon.)

Her success was but moderate. People came to tell Mlle. Raucourt, who was delighted, together with her numerous friends. There was a great alarm in the enemy's camp at this lack of success. There was an agitation. M. Legouvé, the teacher of Mlle. Duchesnois, was naturally very disturbed. Mme. Legouvé, a woman of wit and intelligence, neglected nothing, and employed every means to obtain a brilliant revenge. Mme. de Montesson, General de Valence, all were under arms. In fact, all forces were under arms not to fail in this second attempt. It was only fair. Dear Mlle. Duchesnois was like me: she needed a success. Born of a very poor family, what would have become of her? She was good, and wished, like me, to make them happy.

Women were not wanting at this performance; women are so kind and indulgent. When they hear any one say, “How unfortunate that the débutante should be so lacking in physical charms.”

“Not at all; she is quite nice-looking, and has a very good figure.”

“Yes, but she is very thin and dark.”

“Do you think so? You are very hard to please.

As for me, I find her quite pretty enough. For her talent's sake it is lucky she is not beautiful : she will attend more zealously to her art. Flatterers and admirers will not come to disturb her studies ; she will become a great artiste. We shall come and listen to her often and take pleasure in seeing her."

"I can quite believe you," replies the husband ; "you will always gain by comparison. Ah ! the women will go mad about the Duchesnois."

However that may be, Mlle. Duchesnois had a very successful début. She had some very nice qualities : a melodious voice, great ardour, and a beautiful pronunciation.

She has been reproached with chanting her lines, with psalmodising ; that was Talma's opinion especially, and he spoke tragedy so well. As for me, it is not my place to judge Mlle. Duchesnois. The rivalry, I will even say quarrel, which they wanted to establish between us, imposes silence on me, and I must keep my young opinion to myself.¹

Her débuts being ended, those of Raucourt's

¹ In 1803 there appeared a little work entitled "The conspiracy of Mlle. Duchesnois against Mlle. George Weymer, to rob her of the crown, with evidence gathered by M. J. Boullault. This work is dedicated to the Stalls, Orchestra, Boxes, Balcony, Pit, and even the Gallery of the Théâtre-Français." Published at Paris by Pillet jeune, place des Trois Marie, near Pont Neuf, and by Martinet, rue du Coq Honoré, n. 124, year xi, 1803. The work contains no less than eighty pages ! What a passion there was for the theatre in those days !

pupil were awaited with curiosity. It was very piquant to see the pupil of fourteen in the presence of la Duchesnois.

“What a draw for the public to see the two débutantes struggling. It will be amusing.”

Who would be the victor? Attention was divided: there was quite an excitement, and the box-office was besieged. The theatre is a great affair; people would rush from all parts to get seats with the same ardour that excites them to-day at la porte de Mirès to obtain shares.

At last here I am, though still a child, in the arena! I am announced: Clytemnestra in *Iphigénie en Aulide*. My début!

(*Here, friend Valmore, are the newspapers; you will see the date there.*)

Mlle. Raucourt presented me to the general assembly; all the Comédie-Française gave me a maternal reception. I owed that to the friendship and regard they had for Mlle. Raucourt. (*Respect and good manners were the custom.*) I was treated like the child of the house. The next day there was a rehearsal, and Mlle. Raucourt presented her pupil. I received all the encouragements so necessary at this supreme moment. Mlle. Raucourt was more excited than I was. I was ignorant of the danger, laughed, and amused myself with everything to such a point that on the eve of my début, while returning from the rue Taitbout, I had a lark in the rue des Colonnes, knocking and ringing at every door. I only had a few hours

more of that existence of joy and indifference before plunging right into a life of excitement.

At midday the crowd thronged all the doors of the theatre. (*That is true, dear Madame Valmore ; I am not lying.*) At half-past four, to enter at the stage-door, the guard had to be sent to clear a passage, and poor Mlle. Raucourt managed to sprain her foot ; but the courageous woman would not leave me. She had herself carried into my dressing-room, and her doctor came to dress her foot. She looked very touching, and I cried a lot.

“ There, my child, calm yourself. It is nothing, and I am in no pain.”

She was taken into a small proscenium-box which looked on to the theatre. My entry was received with favour. I had the good luck to obtain a great success in my first scene. My fear was slight, although the house was full ; the First Consul was in his box, and the good and charming Joséphine and all the family were present at the début. The pit was filled with actors and people of distinction. All Mlle. Raucourt's friends were there : Mme. Dugazon's son, Danty, Audinot's son, the manager of the Ambigu-Comique, all devoted friends ; Castéja, an old prefect ; the Duke of Fitz-James, Prince d'Hénin all were in the audience. On my side, my brother in the pit, and my sister in the stalls, put on all my mother's old gloves to make the most noise possible in applauding.

After my first scene, my fear increased, but

action came to my help. Mlle. Vanhove played Iphigénie ; Mlle. Fleury, Éryphile ; Saint-Prix,¹ Agamemnon ; Talma, Achille. My dear Talma was hissed as Achille, the partisans of the handsome Lafont were irritated at not having their Lafont. How Talma had his revenge in the same part, which became one of his finest ! The feeling of the public against Talma began to trouble me. Every moment, Mlle. Raucourt sent me a message. "It is going well. Keep firm. There is a cabal. Don't be afraid, but keep on trembling all the same."

On reaching the fourth act, at the grand tirade—

"Vous ne démentez pas une race funeste"—

I was several times interrupted by hearty applause. Everything was certainly going too splendidly. The malcontents vented their animosity on me at the verse—

"Avant qu'un nœud fatal l'unit à votre frère."

There was a murmuring, the malevolence was too cruel. Mlle. Raucourt cried to me from her box, "Begin again !" I began again. The same murmurs. It came to clapping, and there was much applause. The First Consul disowned the cabal by

¹ Saint-Prix (Jean-Amable Foucault), born at Paris, rue de Grenelle, Saint-Honoré, June 9, 1758 ; bourgeois comedy, la Montausier's Company at Versailles ; made his début on trial, November 9, 1782, and was received ; Sociétaire, March 24, 1784 ; pensioned, April 1, 1818 ; died, October 28, 1834 (Georges Monval, *Liste alphabétique des Sociétaires*, etc.).

applauding. There were cries of, "Begin again." And I began again with more ardour. Saint-Prix said to me, "That's right, child. They want to intimidate you, but don't give way." The third attempt was carried at the point of the sword, and my success was all the greater because it was a protest against palpable malevolence. I was recalled with frenzy. Mlle. Raucourt could not appear. Some one came forward to express her thanks and explain the accident which prevented her from responding to the honour which was being done to her. It was a rough evening for professor and débutante; and indeed for friends as well, for they came into the dressing-room quite in perspiration, and some had torn clothes, since it had come to fists. My poor brother, Charles, had his hands covered with blood. The good Kreutzer was also in the audience; he was in rags, but he was such an artiste, and so enthusiastic. There was a general embracing.

"What a grand evening, Raucourt."

"Yes, indeed, it was pretty hot. The little madcap never lost her head, though there was reason for it." Monvel said to me—

"Good, little one; did you know the line—

" ' A vaincre sans péril, on triomphe sans gloire ' ? "

Mlle. Contat did not fail, for the sake of her dear Fanny, to be present at the début. After the performance she went at once to Mlle. Raucourt's box. She embraced me repeatedly, a very rare thing for

her. Even Mlle. Raucourt said to me, "You ought to be very proud."

The First Consul and Joséphine sent to compliment Mlle. Raucourt and to inquire about her sprain, and all the family of the First Consul did the same. Ah! can that evening ever be forgotten? No, never! Those recollections are never effaced. The crowd of fashionable people and of artistes who were squeezed together in the dressing-room, which could scarcely contain them all at once, was very fine and imposing. There was the good Mme. Dugazon, la Saint-Aubin, the artistes from the Grand Opéra, all had met to support Raucourt's pupil; in those days there was such fraternity among great artistes.

We supped at Mme. Dugazon's. Oh, the advice I had to listen to! I was taken aside.

"You did very well, my child; but at your second début avoid copying your professor."

Another said, "Always do as Mme. Raucourt tells you. Mind your walk, and don't raise your arms too much. Follow your inspiration, that is much better; give yourself up to nature, and don't play away from it."

Still another said, "Don't be afraid. It is better to overshoot the mark than not reach it."

There were too many suggestions for my experience to be able to distinguish the good from the bad. As a matter of fact, my head was in a whirl. It was a real Chinese puzzle.

I returned home worn out. My father and

mother decided that henceforth we would return home for our modest repast. I played Clytemnestra again. I cannot speak of the crowd which came to my débuts. Only it should be known that they lasted for more than a year with a full house. My second début was more brilliant, and without a hitch. Then I played Aménaïde in *Tancrède*, a part which I liked very much, and which was very fortunate for me. What shall I say of my early successes? But you can peruse, dear readers, if you like, the newspapers of that period. The part of Idamé from *l'Orphelin de la Chine* brought me fresh honours. I was credited with depths of maternal tenderness, and, indeed, I loved these mothers' parts. I felt more at ease while playing them. Then followed Didon, Émilie, from *Cinna*, and finally Phèdre. Ah! I found that so frightfully difficult that I trembled like a leaf. Mlle. Raucourt made me play it, however. She made me work at it more than all the others. Then I said to her—

“It seems to me that for this woman who doesn't eat I am far too healthy.”

“Imbecile! Am I thin, then? Must one look like the beggar of Père Lachaise to play Phèdre well? She does not eat, true; but it is only for three days.”

“Ah, yes, of course; that reassures me.” I played with more confidence.

Joséphine had sent Mlle. Duchesnois and me our costumes for *Phèdre*. They were very beau-

tiful, trimmed with gold. That of the Duchesnois was more elaborate—a red cloak spangled with stars, a veil, etc. Mine was more simple—a Marie-Louise blue cloak, with simple embroidery. The First Consul sent me a remittance of three thousand francs, and the same sum to Mlle. Duchesnois.

We were very happy in our little family after my first performance of *Phèdre*. With what appetite I ate my good lentil salad! But my beautiful mantle had quite torn my arms. My nurse rubbed them with the oil from our excellent lentils.

“Bah! that’s nothing, *ma bonne*. What do a few scratches on the arms matter when one has had such a beautiful evening? The First Consul was there again with his good Joséphine. She wanted to see me in her beautiful costume. It suited me well, didn’t it, father?”

What good luck all at once! The next day Mlle. Raucourt, who put fabulous sums into lotteries, gained a *trey*, and made me a present of two little dresses. Of silk, you think! Not at all, if you please, but of cloth—which was quite good enough for the poor débutante. Poor, but happy. Charmed and dazed by my successes. The crowd which surrounded me, and everything was dazzling to me. When I went to the play I was given a royal reception. What illusions for a poor little strolling player from the country!

(*Here, dear friends, are the papers which will enable you to classify the parts of my débuts, and perhaps you may reproduce some extracts: that ekes out the sauce.*)

We thought of moving to settle in our furniture. Yes, really, our furniture. A little flat was found in the rue Sainte-Anne, at the corner of the Clos-Georgeot—an *entresol* which looked on a little bit of a street, right opposite a blacksmith. A charming neighbour, which charmed my sleep, and did me the service of making me rise two or three hours earlier.

Our fine furniture consisted of a black horsehair suite for the drawing-room—yes, the drawing-room, although my dear mother slept there. But it had a recess curtained off, so it was a drawing-room, and it had a little table in the centre. Then there were chairs in the dining-room, and in my bedroom a table and a chest of drawers, which I still keep as a souvenir. There was, besides, a tiny dressing-room, with a couch and table, which I was pleased to call my boudoir. We were right at the back of the courtyard, and, to complete our comfort, there were stables below us, with livery coaches kept for hire by Mme. Arsène. That dear creature was long in my service. I never pass along the rue Sainte-Anne without glancing up at my four bow-windows, which are still there. Heaven grant that they may not be demolished!

Mme. Germont, Joséphine's *couturière*, occupied the first floor in this house, and I often looked

in. I used to amuse myself very much with the work-girls, for—shocking, scandalous thing ! I say it to my shame !—we would, in the evening, run and play hide-and-seek in the road. That was a nice thing to see the *débutante* (who, doubtless wrongly, was causing all Paris to flock to her) playing in the street like a naughty urchin ! So I was thoroughly well scolded by my mother and Mlle. Raucourt when the crime was discovered. I was to behave like an artiste, and be bored.

Lucien Bonaparte, whom I always saw at his sister's, Mme. Bacciochi, where I repaired nearly every morning, sent me a beautiful scarlet *nécessaire* and a hundred gold louis. That made me wild with pleasure, and I danced all around my *nécessaire*. As for the money, I didn't know what to do with it—that was for mamma.

But, alas ! the good Lucien left for Italy. He had just married ; he, a widower, had married a widow. One staunch protector the less for me, and I was also deprived of his good advice in tragedy, which he was passionately fond of. I believe that, in spite of his love for his new bride, he had a little fancy for me ; he even spoke of his plans to Mme. Raucourt with all the delicacy possible. He wished to place me in a house *of my own*, giving me all the masters possible ; my mother, my poor little proud and distinguished mother, was even spoken to about it—my future was assured. I was even taken under a pretext to see the house, and they ended by telling me that it should be mine,

but that I must live in it alone. Ah ! very likely ; but what is the good of your house to me without my people ? Why, I should die there. I don't want it, and refuse it with all my heart. But all this happened a long time before his departure, which one was far from foreseeing, but still the day of departure came.

Ah, the men ! they love you and deceive you. But perhaps in this case there was a perfectly honourable and straightforward desire simply to make me happy ! Such things are possible, such things have actually been known. They are rare, I grant, but still they have happened, as I am about to prove.

PRINCE SAPIEHA

In the midst of all the noise and splendid success one had to be on one's guard. You understand that many overtures and proposals were made, and how could it be otherwise ? On the stage one always has admirers, handsome and ugly ; one is assailed by them. My mother received and refused these proposals, as was her duty. A sister of my mother's came to stay with us ; she was my sister Oribelle's godmother, a very good hearted woman, but quite a coquette, giddy and inconsequent, and not in the least strict. I liked her very much, and the reason is easy to find ; I told her things I never would have dared to tell my mother. Besides, she flattered me—decidedly one likes to be

flattered. Whenever I played, my mother had a thousand observations to make—and she was right. My aunt always found me superb—she was wrong, still she pleased me. Then she told me all that she had heard. Alas! she doubtless lied; she did me harm, but she gave me pleasure. My mother, on the contrary, used to say to me, “I heard some one say that you ought to pay more attention to your walk; that your exits were faulty, while your delivery was sometimes too hurried, so that the words lost their charm.”

My mother was right, but it did not please me. Treacherous flattery is our undoing, yet we love it. We are always discarding the good and choosing the evil. That which should have drawn me to my mother estranged me, that which should have estranged me from my aunt drew me nearer to her; by her exaggerated praises she attracted my confidence. Oh! how was one so young to understand and distinguish between good and evil?

I lived very simply, and went on foot to the theatre through the frightful passage Saint-Guillaume. However, I had been given the luxury of a dresser—an indispensable luxury. I would never have consented to see my mother in the wings holding my glass of water; besides she would not have done it. She never came behind the scenes; she had her box, and kept to it all the evening. I find it so humiliating and out of place to see a mother at her daughter's side; that gives

material for objectionable interpretations, at least that is my way of looking at it. I had many little worries to experience from my rivals, and many vile anonymous letters, a despicable custom which was indulged in too much. When I played well I got them from soured people ; but that was such a small matter that I bothered myself very little about it : it animated me in fact. Opposition always suited me—it was a stimulus which spurred me on. One day, however, an infamous thing was done to me. I was to play Phèdre in the evening. At noon I received a wretched little paper which said that at Abbeville, during a performance, some rubbish had fallen from the side of the theatre, and had hit the conductor of the orchestra—the conductor was my father. You may judge of my fright and despair. Heavens ! What was I to do ? There was no railway and no electric telegraph. I did not wish to play—I was going to start at once ; I felt dead. At four o'clock I received a letter from my father. Life returned to me—what a shock I had been given ! I wrote at once that I would play ; but the blow had been so violent and lacerating that I arrived exhausted at the theatre, and at the fourth act I fell on the stage at the side of the good Mme. Guen, who was playing Œnone. She was such a frail little woman that she was unable to lift me, so I had to be carried off. The public, which was so kind to me, asked for news, and Florence announced that it was impossible for me to continue. There was not

a murmur. The rumour of the cause of my fainting soon spread through the house. The authors of such an infamy were sought out and recognised. I could have pursued the matter to make a scandal ; but I have never cared about it. Rivalry often makes you very cruel ; so much the worse for her who has the evil instinct, she will be punished for it. A few days afterwards I thought no more about it, I only said in the person's ear, "You were very cruel ; but it's all the same—go on, you will end by amusing me very much."

(That is a fact. It was the good Duchesnois who had had the article inserted.)

I was not without visitors, especially foreigners, who are generally very fond of artistes and their society. There was an old Marquis de Veuil, who was always in observation, and who constituted himself the cicerone of every stranger of distinction who arrived. The marquis led a jolly life, and kept a carriage. How did he manage to keep up such an existence ? No one knows. But still he was received everywhere. People are so indifferent and easy in Paris. You come in a carriage, you wear a ribbon in your lapel ; you are the man to do the right thing : so, it is understood that you are received everywhere. He came to visit me in my dressing-room, nearly always accompanied by some handsome gentleman covered with orders, and always a foreigner ! The old marquis presented them all to Count de Livry's set, a set where play went on. Doubtless the old marquis got his

commission from the introduction. He asked permission to pay his respects to me at home (he was very polite, the old marquis).

“Come, by all means, marquis, I will receive you.”

He visited my modest retreat, and was very surprised.

“Well, yes, marquis, you see how it is. I am quite comfortable.”

“Good gracious, what a noise ! One can scarcely hear oneself speak.”

“Don’t get alarmed : it is my neighbour the smith, who, unfortunately for your delicate ears, is very busy to-day. It is very annoying, and I am very sorry about it. As for me I am used to it.”

“But you can’t stay here.”

“I am going to stay here unless you have a palace to offer me. Till then I won’t be separated from my blacksmith : I am fond of him.”

“Dear young lady, one needs to be young like you to endure such a din.”

“I endure it and laugh at it.”

“I came to beg you to receive Prince Sapieha, a distinguished man, who adores artistes and seeks their society. He goes to your performances every time, and he will be very happy if you will receive him.”

“Why not, if my mother allows it ? We receive many people, as my neighbour the smith can tell you ; so I can receive Prince Sapieha.”

My aunt encouraged this reception a great deal ; perhaps she liked Poles !

The prince was presented to me. He was certainly a very distinguished man, tall and slender, with a refined and charming physiognomy. He was elegant without affectation, very simple, which is a sure sign of an aristocrat. He stayed but a short time, and did not load me with compliments, which is, again, very distinguished in a man of parts, and obtained leave to come next day. He returned, and asked permission for me to accept as homage to my youthful talent a superb red cashmere shawl, a lace veil, and a small trinket for the neck, with a chain and a small medallion. My mother said to him—

“Monsieur, if you offer these presents to the artiste, she will receive them as an artiste.”

Prince Sapieha, really a great noble, was smitten with me, not with love to be sure, but he felt a real attachment. He regarded me as a child who is amused with everything. Prince Lucien before his departure sent me a magnificent scarlet *nécessaire*; at the bottom of the silver-gilt teapot were a hundred golden louis.

“Just look, mother, here are some gold pieces. Take them quickly. Ah, how good M. Lucien is to think of his little protégée! I will go and thank him.”

I was received next day at noon; he said to me—

“Dear child, that is such a little matter. I wanted to do more to make you independent and happy.”

“ But I am very happy.”

“ Yes, for the moment ; but consider how uncertain everything is. You are young : think of the future. The public is capricious ; try to make yourself independent before retiring, in case you experience a reverse.”

He had taken my arm, and was trotting me about the garden, moralising. He was right. He led me to my carriage, which he ordered to advance to the grille which looked out on the rue de l'Université. There was, and is still, a pump at the same place. I never pass there without giving a glance at the great gate and thinking gratefully of Prince Lucien.

He left next day. I promised to write to him about everything which happened to me. I did it for some time, and then no more ; I was an ungrateful creature. I reproached myself about it, but too late. The past one forgets too quickly, one can never recall it : it is too late. Alas, those words, *too late!* It is frightful !

I very much wanted a pair of bracelets made of some one or other's hair, with two large roses for clasps. I had seen these bracelets at a little one-eyed jeweller's. They cost a fabulous sum : two hundred francs. It was not to be dreamed of. Out of Prince Lucien's hundred louis my mother bought them for me, and placed them without telling me in my *nécessaire*, which I used to visit at least ten times a day. I leave you to imagine how delighted I was. What a long time I kept the two little

bracelets ! They cost me a fabulous sum in cotton wool. I changed it every day, which amused Prince Sapieha very much.

“You can’t remain in these little lodgings ; you must look for others. Don’t bother about anything else.”

My aunt went on the track, and in the rue Saint-Honoré, No. 334, opposite the mansion of M. Lebrun, the Third Consul, I was taken to look at some apartments on the first floor with a large balcony. Ah, if only they do not pull down that beautiful house and my dear balcony, my first luxury ! Fancy, apartments at 2,400 francs, with coach-houses and stables !

“Ah, aunt, how beautiful it is ; but there is no furniture, there are no horses.”

“Reassure yourself ; I am charged with all that.”

“By whom ? ”

“By Prince Sapieha.”

“Indeed, by Prince Sapieha ! That is all very well ; but I don’t like him, so I wish to accept nothing.”

“He knows that, but it makes no difference to him ; he wants you to have a nice establishment such as you deserve.”

“He doesn’t want anything else ? Well and good.”

After all my conditions had been properly fixed I let the generous nobleman do all he desired. It may appear very strange, perhaps, to meet with so

much disinterested magnificence. It exists and has existed for me, and doubtless for many others besides. Have we not seen people who have left legacies to artistes in their wills? Prince Sapieha gave his bequests during his lifetime, which is much greater and more nobly generous. He made people happy at once. It is much better to be blessed in one's lifetime than after one's death. It is less egotistical; that which one gives one has no more, so that only to give after one's death is but miserly generosity.

I was consulted about my tastes. They were very few; on leaving my little retreat everything seemed luxury to me. I had my bedroom in lilac and embroidered muslin. As for the boudoir which led into my room, I would let nothing be placed there, keeping it for my maid; I was too big a coward not to have her near me. The drawing-room was in pink silk, and black velvet. The dining-room was entirely in white. In those days luxury was very modest, the middle period did not exist, and Boule furniture was unknown. It was a mistake; it is really beautiful. There is now such elegant taste in furniture. Besides the springs are so good, the sofas so comfortable, instead of our hard furniture. We had everything classical, which was doubtless very elegant, but very gloomy and severe. In the midst of a Grecian setting one could not put on the airs of a Pompadour. One would have looked grotesque. Tunics and coiffures *à la* Titus were worn; it was

a very pretty style, but sad to have to cut off one's beautiful hair. One became half a man. The Indian muslin tunics were very charming, and it was really nice to have bare shoulders and arms. But how wretched for the thin women! One had to be somewhat statuesque to carry the costume to advantage. Statues show their shoulders, bosoms and arms. I was very astonished when I saw tragédiennes covered right to the neck like men. I said to myself: Perhaps everything has changed. The statues of to-day are more modest; they wish to be dressed like vestal virgins. To be sure it is more proper! Morality demands it! People have become so chaste. Besides, it suits thin women so well. Still Venus and Diana have their admirers. But perhaps they, too, will soon be veiled. Let us hope so: morality demands it!

(Dear Valmores, both of you please excuse my nonsense.)

Let us return to human matters. Here I am, then, in my apartments. There is nothing lacking, but my head is not the least turned with all the splendour. I walk on the magnificent carpets. I see myself reflected in superb mirrors, but I look no more frequently!

My good prince was happy in the kindness he was doing me. Every day there were pleasant surprises. China was everywhere, even on the little table in my bedroom; the table was also classical, with gilded fauns' feet and white marble. While I was at the play my nurse came to dust;

she was very tidy and very clumsy. The table was upset, and all the beautiful china smashed. Poor Marianne, how she feared my return, or, even more, my mother's. What was to be done? As for me I laughed.

"There, don't torment yourself. I would rather that than be ill. Tell mamma, and, above all, don't answer back, and go quickly to bed; to-morrow it won't be seen any more. Bah! we will get some others; only it doesn't do to be so tidy!"

We were pretty nearly "en famille." My mother and my aunt were always very indulgent. My brother Charles, who was first violin at the Théâtre de Feydeau, did not live with us, but came to dine every day with his family. My good father was still at Amiens, and travelled frequently to Paris. We kept a carriage, and my aunt had brought with her a little boy, the son of her *bonne*, a poor woman who died at Amiens in a frightful way. My aunt had just taken a foot-bath in a china basin. She got back to bed and rang for Jane to take away the basin. My aunt lived on the second floor, with windows and a balcony. Unfortunate woman! The bath water was soapy; the basin slipped, and in trying to catch it Jane fell on to the pavement, and her head was smashed. A frightful sight! My aunt was very grieved to lose the woman in such a way, who had been in her service for twelve years, so she looked after her orphan son. It was the same little Joseph

whom I dressed as a jockey, what we call a tiger to-day, who stood behind the carriage in the day-time. Joseph was very happy, but in the evening he was terribly afraid, and we were obliged to take him with us inside the carriage, much to our amusement. Poor little fellow! We were very fond of him, and we did not wish to make him unhappy and doubtless ill through fear. "Some one will catch hold of my legs. Oh, do take me inside; I shall fall."

Life was full of gaiety. There were artistic triumphs and passionate declarations. On reaching home I was always sure of finding a good number of the latter, and among them some very curious ones.

One day I had an appointment at the Catacombs. Fie! horror! I could only be seen there, I was told; it was necessary to act with mystery; the considerations which had to be watched were so great, but I need not be in the least afraid. My position would be compromised in acting with less prudence. "I know how you inspire an illustrious personage; it would be dangerous for me if the passion you inspire me with were perceived. Trust me, then, and come; if I am fortunate enough not to displease you, I swear that a visit in a place which at first must seem gloomy to you shall not be renewed. My ardent desire is to dedicate my life to you, and place my fortune at your feet. If you consent, stand this evening at midnight before your window."

Very well, yes, I will stand at the window,

but to laugh at you. You can wait for me, amiable lover, in the midst of your charming retreat of bones, and place your sighs and your fortune there. Come then, Clémentine (my maid); he is a fool or an assassin. His proposal is a nice one! If he makes many such offers of his fortune, he will keep it for a long while. That lover is nothing but a Jew, and a Jew and a Gascon combined!

This droll lover pursued me with three or four letters; then I heard no more mention of him. I was wrong not to take the letters to the prefect of police. To-day one would not fail to do so. The imbecile fears to lose his position, he says, and places his fortune at my feet! Renounce your position, impassioned man, and unmask yourself in the open day; then, perhaps, we will consent to look at you. What soft pleasantry!

Another, who was of a good family, said if I would consent to receive him, he would disguise himself as a woman. That would certainly have been fun! But I never admitted travesties.

Another announced himself under the name of *M. Papillottes* (*Mr. Curling Papers*). This seemed humorous; my maid had seen him. He was a man of about forty-five, nice, with good manners, but very original. He slipped into the theatre, and when I played chatted with the gentlemen and ladies. With me he assumed the air of a dear papa. One day he heard me cough.

“Allow me to send you some *sirop des îles*, it is excellent for the chest.”

“Thank you, monsieur, I shall be very pleased.”

Next day, I actually received boxes of *sirops*, *liqueurs des îles*, and sugar-loaves. Ah, the good man is a wholesale grocer! He came to see me, the dear fellow! Ah, there was no danger in receiving him. What a singular personage!

“Ah! you have a bad hair-dresser. He puts in your curl-papers very badly. Let me arrange them for you.”

Heavens! perhaps he is a wig-maker! I laughed with Clémentine till I was nearly ill.

“Come, give some paper to monsieur, since he wants so much to do my hair.”

“No, no, your paper is no good. I have mine in my pocket.”

“Doubtless, Clémentine, he is an insolent hair-dresser.”

“Have you also your curling-irons?”

“No, mademoiselle, there is no need to use heat for my curling-papers. Just let them stop in two hours, and your hair will curl wonderfully; you will see how pleased you will be.”

I yielded my head to him, and he fixed I don't know how many curl-papers for me, then he said—

“Will you let me visit you in a few days?”

“Certainly.”

“Clémentine, never let that man enter again: you understand? Come quickly, remove all the paper, and tidy my hair. The beast of a man has pulled it and hurt me horribly. Come quickly, and remove the dirty paper.”

“Good gracious, what queer paper! Look, mademoiselle!”

They were banknotes! Why, of course, he was a banker. There were at least twenty notes, each for 500 francs.

(My good friend Valmore, it is true, I swear to you.)

Ah, that fellow had no need of Catacombs; but “Papillottes” is a very pretty name, and I hope he will stick to it.

I had enough of M. Papillottes, who had placed his twenty 500-franc notes on my head. In spite of monsieur’s golden coiffure, he bored me, and very often I refused him the door. That was a pity, for the dear man was very much in love with his hair-dressing profession, in which he acquitted himself so well, only asking humbly to kiss my hand. His was a courtesy extremely rare, but in spite of it I had to put an end to it: all his curling-papers could not rid me of the somnolence his presence caused me.

The elegant Prince Sapieha was witty and very amusing. I saw him rarely; he had a frenzied passion for play, which occupied him exclusively. Besides, he did not care at all about love: I interested him and that was all. He was really my friend. Friendly conversations are apt to languish.

“How are you, my dear child?”

“Quite well; and you, prince.”

“I am very tired, dear. I spent the night at

play, and am done up this morning. Ah, you played Aménaïde yesterday. Had you many people?"

"A great many; besides the First Consul was there."

"Diable! Is the First Consul, then, so fond of tragedy? He goes nearly every time."

"It is true, but Talma always plays with me, and the First Consul is very fond of Talma. As for me, I feel more animated when I see him in his box, and he knows it. He must see himself sometimes among those great heroes; I am sure he talks with them. He is so great, too, is our First Consul; grandeur suits him so well, and how handsome he is! I should like to see him and speak to him. I am told his voice and speech are very soft. And what a pretty little hand! it is seen to perfection, for he places it in front of his box. Very likely there is some amorous intention in that. Why not? Great men have their weaknesses, too."

"My dear, you are mad about your First Consul."

"No, I am not mad about him; I like and admire him, the same as everybody else. You see, when he enters his box, the women rise and applaud him, but still they are not mad about him. It is the enthusiasm of delirium; it is no use to keep order. Really it is a regular outburst."

I believe the prince was not of my opinion. Ah! if he had said a word against my Consul, I should very politely have shown him the door. I have

always loved the name of Napoleon: it was my cult, and I have never changed it. I have never been so silly as to have opinions—I, a woman and an actress! But I have allowed myself to adore his name, and my affections have always remained faithful. I have never hidden them, and have proclaimed them to whoever wished to listen to me. It is of no consequence—still it comforted my poor heart.

III

Bonaparte—Liaison with the First Consul—Talleyrand—Talma

MY first interview with the First Consul.

I had just played *Iphigénie en Aulide* (Clytemnestra). The First Consul was present at the performance. On returning home I found the Consul's chief valet, Constant, who came to beg me, on behalf of the Consul, to allow myself to be taken next evening, at eight o'clock, to Saint-Cloud, because the Consul wished to congratulate me himself on my success.

I was seized with a kind of fright, I who some days before had manifested to the prince my ambitious desire of speaking to the Consul. The occasion was offered and I was petrified. Was I content? Indeed, no, and at that moment I was very little desirous of grandeurs. What was I to do? How was I to answer Constant, who was there with his jolly face seeming so astonished at

the immobility of mine? What a strange thing is the human heart!

I who had never thought of Prince Sapieha, thought of him then; of him who was so excellent, such a great noble, who offered me everything I could desire, who was so amusing, had such charming manners, asking nothing but to kiss the tips of my fingers, leaving me in perfect liberty and in my peaceful innocence, a thing agreed upon and adhered to between us. What could I desire more? Nothing! Well, if I had to be ungrateful I was going to be so with a vengeance. I confess curiosity settled it, or self-love: how do I know? I replied to Constant, "Tell the First Consul, monsieur, that I shall have the honour of repairing to Saint-Cloud to-morrow. You can come and fetch me at eight o'clock, but not at my home, at the theatre." At the theatre? Why? I don't know at all. I suppose to compromise myself at once. Foolish vanity which took possession of a poor young girl!

After dismissing Constant I was very sad. I passed a quite restless night and was very discontented with myself. What shall I say to the Consul? What does he want of me? Besides, he could quite well come to me. Certainly this interview is worrying me, and I am very much tempted not to go to Saint-Cloud. In spite of these reflections I speculated how I ought to dress. In white or pink? An elaborate toilette or a pretty *négligé*? Bah! I will see to that to-morrow. I am going to sleep at last. Heavens! why has the

Consul taken a fancy to see me? He is master, and one can't refuse. That is quite right: it is not my fault, I couldn't refuse. So let us go to sleep.

At eight o'clock I rang for my maid.

"Well, Clémentine, I haven't closed an eye. I wanted badly to ring for you and chat. Come, let us talk. What am I to put on to go there?"

"Ah, mademoiselle, what a bad temper you are in! How many others there are who would like to be in your place!"

"Do you think so? That's nice."

"Yes, certainly, mademoiselle; if the Volnais, the Bourgoins,¹ or even Mlle. Mars herself could be called in your place, they would be overjoyed. Just imagine, it is the First Consul! If you don't understand, it is because you are quite a child."

Clémentine was a shrewd, sharp maid, who understood how to get the upper hand. She pricked my *amour propre* through my vanity: she made her point. Poor humanity!

The day seemed to me immeasurably long. I could not stay still; I went to the bois de Boulogne; I visited my perfumer and milliner. At the theatre I met Talma.

"What is the matter with you? You look

¹ Bourgoins (Marie-Thérèse-Étiennette), born in Paris, rue des Deux-Anges, July 4, 1781; made her début, September 13, 1799; fresh débuts, November 28, 1801; Sociétaire in March 1802; retired, April 1, 1829; died in Paris, April 11, 1833; interred at Père-Lachaise (Georges Monval, *Liste alphabétique des Sociétaires*, etc.).

quite distraught. I wish you good-day, and you do not reply and push past me. Are you ill? or are you angry with the manager?"

"It is you, Talma, who are mad to say what you do. There is nothing the matter with me."

Fleury took me by the hands, the old scoffer.

"Come, look at me. To-day you are as red as a cherry, you who are generally as pale as the lily of the valley. Are you angry? Look, Contat: don't you note a strange air about her, an air of conquest! Ha! ha! there is something up!"

Ah, mon Dieu! is it known already? What do these people mean, then?

"I have a headache. Can't I have a headache? You have the gout badly, Monsieur Fleury, and you laugh at me. Well, are you in a good temper when you have the gout?"

"Oh, what a naughty girl! Don't let us talk to her any more, she is in the mood to treat us all badly, even her well beloved Talma. Let us embrace her as a punishment and be off."

Charming and amiable Fleury! he was always a marquis, even in his slippers and dressing-gown!

I returned home quickly. It seemed to me as if I had a tablet on my back, on which was written my appointment. Six o'clock at last. "Come, Clémentine, dress me; a white muslin *négligé*, but nothing on my head, a lace veil, a cashmere shawl—that is all. I am going to the theatre to pass away the two mortal hours. Come with me: you can tell me when Constant comes."

I installed myself in a box to be quite alone. Volnais found me there. Heaven bless her ! What a bore ! *Misanthropie et repentir* was being played : I shall never forget.

“Are you going to see all the show, George ?”

“No ; and you ?”

“Neither am I ; I have something on at nine o'clock.”

(Good. She has, too.)

“Where are you going, then, in such a fine toilette ? Is there a ball somewhere ?”

“No, I am going to a soirée. Your dress is splendid.” (I confess I preferred mine ; it was simpler.)

Poor Volnais. She was going to our brave Governor's, General Junot. The dress presaged the bad taste of her admirer. The liaison had lasted a long time. She planted on him children he was not responsible for, but which Michelot had taken the trouble to manufacture.

(*That is for you to see to, my dear Valmore.*)

Clémentine came.

“You are waited for.”

“Ah, Clémentine, how I should like to return home !”

I found Constant at the foot of the staircase at the stage door. We got into the carriage driven by the celebrated César, who was rather too fond of the bottle. This habit had its advantage ; on the day the bomb was to be thrown in the rue Nicaise it saved the Emperor and Empress, who were on their way to the opera, for César, being

somewhat intoxicated, drove his horses with such rapidity that the frightful attempt failed.

At last we are off. What passed within me on the road it is impossible to describe. My heart beat enough to burst through my bosom. I did not talk. From time to time I said to Constant—

“I am dying of fear. You would do well to take me back home, and to tell the First Consul that I am indisposed. Do that, and I promise you to come another time.”

“Ah, very likely! I should be well received!”

“But when I tell you, monsieur, that my fear is so great that I could not say a word, that I shall be frozen, and your First Consul will consider me the greatest stupid he has ever seen. Do you know I shall be very humiliated?”

Constant laughed quite heartily, which seemed very rude to me.

“Reassure yourself. You will see how kind the Consul is, you will very soon be rid of your fright. Be calm, he is waiting for you with lively impatience. Ah! here we are! Come, mademoiselle, reassure yourself, but, of course, go on trembling.”

We crossed the orangery, then we reached the bedroom window which looks out on the terrace, where Roustan was waiting for us. He lifted the curtain and closed the window after me, going to another room. Constant said to me: “I am going to tell the First Consul.”

There I was alone in that large room; there

was an immense bed in the background, opposite the window, large green silk curtains, a big sofa stretched before the fire. There were large candelabra filled with lighted candles; and a big chandelier. Heavens! it is lit up as if for a ball. It is frightful. Nothing can escape his glances; a spot of rouge would be seen. Everything is large here. There is not even a little mysterious corner where one can undress; everything is open. This is too fine for me! Let me take that arm-chair. There, between the bed and the fire-place, I shall be a little hidden; I shall not be noticed immediately. Ah, that reassures me a little; then, with my veil well lowered, I shall be bolder.

I hear a little movement. Ah! how my heart beats! It is he. The Consul enters by the door which was at the side of the fire-place, which leads into the library.

(All these details will seem futile to you, my dear Marceline; I think, though, they ought to be given.)

The Consul was in silk stockings, white satin knee-breeches, green uniform, red facings and collar, his hat under his arm.

I got up. He came towards me with that charming smile which only belongs to him, took me by the hand, and made me sit on the enormous sofa. He lifted my veil, which he threw on the ground without more ado.

My beautiful veil! That is kind of him; if he walks on it he will tear it for me. How disagreeable!



Mademoiselle George

In the role of Emile in "Cinna". From a painting by Lagrenée in the Théâtre des Arts, at the Comédie Française.

“How your hand trembles! Are you then afraid of me? Do I seem terrible to you? I found you exceedingly beautiful yesterday, madame, and I wished to compliment you. I am more amiable and polite than you, as you see.”

“How is that, monsieur?”

“How! I sent you a remittance of three thousand francs after seeing you in *Émilie*, as a proof of the pleasure you gave me. I hoped you would ask permission to present yourself to thank me. But the beautiful and haughty *Émilie* did not come.”

I stammered, and did not know what to say.

“But I did not know; I did not dare to take the liberty.”

“Oh, a poor excuse! Were you, then, afraid of me?”

“Yes.”

“And now?”

“Still more.”

The Consul laughed heartily.

“Tell me your name.”

“*Joséphine-Marguerite.*”

“*Joséphine* pleases me, I like that name; but I would prefer to call you *Georgina*. Hein! would you like it? I wish it.”

(This was my name with all the Emperor's family.)

“You do not speak, my dear *Georgina*. Why?”

“Because all these lights fatigue me. Have

them extinguished, I beg you ; it seems to me I shall be more at my ease to listen to you and reply."

"Give your own orders, dear Georgina."

He rang for Rouston.

"Extinguish the chandelier."

"Is that enough ?"

"No, half these enormous candelabra besides."

"Very good. Extinguish them."

"Now does it seem too much ?"

"Not too much, just enough."

(Dear Madame Valmore, all these details will seem very childish to you, but they are true, though badly told by me. In your hands they will be charming. Such taste and delicacy is needed ! You possess all that.)

The Consul, sometimes fatigued by his glorious and responsible duties, seemed to take some pleasure in being with a young girl who spoke simply to him. It was, I think, a new experience for him.

"Come, Georgina, tell me all you have done. Be simple and frank, and tell me."

He was so kind and simple that my fear disappeared.

"I shall bore you. Then how can I tell you everything who have no brains ? I shall be a very bad story-teller."

"Never mind, tell me all the same."

I told the tale of my poor little existence ; how I came to Paris, and all my troubles.

“My dear child, you certainly were not rich; but what is your position now? Who gave you this beautiful shawl, veil, and all the other things?”

He knew everything. I told him the whole truth about Prince Sapieha.

“That is good; you do not lie. You will come and see me and will be very discreet. Promise me.”

He was very tender and delicate. He did not wound my modesty by too much fervour, and was glad to find a timid resistance. Heavens! I do not say he was in love, but quite certainly I pleased him. I could not doubt it. Would he have put up with all my childish whims? Would he have spent a night in his desire to convince me? Moreover, he was very excited and desirous of pleasing me; he yielded to my continuous prayers for indulgence.

“Not to-day; wait, and I will return, I promise you.”

He yielded—that man before whom every one was pliant. Perhaps I charmed him! We went on so till five o’clock in the morning. And since eight o’clock in the evening, that was time enough.

“I should like to go.”

“You must be tired, dear Georgina. Good-bye till to-morrow, then. You will come?”

“Yes, gladly. You are too kind and gracious for one not to love you, and I love you with all my heart.”

He put on my shawl and veil. I was far from guessing as to what was to happen to those poor objects. In saying good-bye he kissed me on my forehead. I was a silly ; I burst out laughing, and said to him—

“Ah, that’s splendid! You have just kissed Prince Sapieha’s veil.”

He took the veil and tore it into a thousand pieces ; the shawl was thrown under his feet. I was wearing, too, a little chain round my neck, which carried a medallion of the most modest of stones, the cornelian ; on my little finger a ring even more modest in crystal, where Mme. Ponty had placed some of Mlle. Raucourt’s white hairs. The little ring was snatched from my finger, and the Consul crushed it beneath his foot. Ah ! he was then no longer gentle. I was afraid, and said to myself, “It will be some time before you see me again.” I trembled. Then he became quite gentle again with me.

“Dear Georgina, you mustn’t have anything except what comes from me. Do not sulk with me ; that would be wrong, and I should have a poor opinion of your feelings if it were otherwise.”

It was impossible to be angry with this man for long ; there was so much sweetness and tenderness in his voice that one was forced to say, “After all, he acted quite rightly.”

(On my life all this is true.)

“You are quite right. No, I am not angry, but I shall be cold.”

He rang for Constant.

“Bring a white cashmere shawl and a large lace veil.” He accompanied me as far as the orangery. “Till to-morrow, Georgina, till to-morrow.”

That is literally my first interview with that immense man. Constant said nothing to me; he did well. I was not disposed to converse with him. He fell into a slumber, and did nothing but snore on the journey. But I did not sleep. I thought the Consul very charming but very violent. It is nothing but an existence of slavery. I am going to give myself, without the least hope of liberty, and I am very fond of my independence. Shall I return to-morrow as I promised him? I am undecided. He pleases me; I find him so kind and gentle with me. Then how do I know that it is not a caprice? It would be very sad and very humiliated to be left. Night brings counsel; let us wait. On reaching home Constant said to me—

“This evening, at eight o’clock, I will come and fetch you.”

“No, I have not decided; come at three o’clock, and I will see. Tell the Consul that I am a little tired, but I will do my utmost not to break the promise I made him.”

Talma came to see me. I told my good Talma everything.

“What! you hesitate? Are you mad? See what a position it is for you. You do not know, child that you are, the First Consul. He is quite a good sort. I do not know how long

his taste for you will last, but I am certain that he will always be kind. An honest young girl, who, in spite of all the temptations which surround her has not yet fallen, will not be abandoned. You have told me, and I believe it."

"You are right to believe me, good Talma. Why should I lie to you?"

(My dear, you see how delicate it is to say: not yet "fallen." Still, it should be known that this was my first step on account of the continuity of this illustrious connection. To-day I am so stupid that I should scarcely be surprised to find myself eating hay. I despair of making anything out of my narrative. Fortunately you have the ability and the poetic sentiment necessary to turn these trifles into charming episodes. But my mind has not the power, and my imagination is always at fault.)

"But see, Talma, it is just because it is my first step that I am very frightened. Thereon, you understand, depends my fate. I reason; so, there, I am not such a child as you think. The Consul is kind; yes, I grant you; I am sure of it. But he is the First Consul and I am a strolling player! He thinks of nothing but glory; and do you think that glory goes with love? No; I want some one to be in love with me. Should I be happy if I come to love the Consul, to be near him only when he orders, when it pleases him! See, Talma, it is slavery. Am I right?"

"Well, then, get married."

“That’s nice advice to give me. I fear slavery, and you wish me to marry!”

“Well, then, would you like me to tell you. You will go this evening to Saint-Cloud. It is your destiny; follow it, therefore. If you don’t go, you will do something stupid which will be very serious for you.”

“That is true. I shall go, because I feel I love him. Dine with me, Talma, if you have nothing else better. We will speak of him; you have known him so well because you see him so often with his wife, the charming Joséphine.”

“Yes, I have seen a good deal of him. I will tell you about it another time. I can’t dine with you, my dear friend, to my great regret, because my wife is waiting for me.”

“Well, get married; it is more honest, but sometimes very boring! One marries for love, I think so at least. When one is no longer in love one must remember what has been. You have this recollection, Talma. That is still something. One is considerate to one’s wife. It is not passion, but it is honest.”

“Where did you learn all this?”

“In seeing married people. Come, dear Talma, be off; it is late. My compliments to madame. To-morrow we play *Cinna*. Do the performances continue?”

“Just at present.”

“So much the worse, but one must do one’s duty.”

At eight o'clock Constant entered the courtyard. He had been at three for orders. So here I am again *tête-à-tête* with the kind, jolly servant. The conversation during the journey was very laconic, especially on my side. It was useless for Constant to say, "The Consul is enchanted with you ; he finds you charming ; he is expecting you with still greater impatience." I remained very silent, saying to myself, "Does the Consul talk with his valet ? For the matter of that, why not ? I talk a great deal with Clémentine. The Consul's familiarity with his valet is only a distraction, that is all. Then he is devoted to him."

(Alas ! time proved the wretch faithless !)

The Consul was waiting for me.

"Good-day, Georgina ; are we in a good humour ?"

"Yes ; always for you."

It was true, he was really charming, his smile celestial, his manners so gentle. He attracted and fascinated you.

"Well, Georgina, you told me the truth. The little ring which I ground beneath my heel did really come from Mlle. Raucourt, the other objects from your handsome Prince Sapieha. You have already, doubtless, told him to stop his visits and presents."

"No ; I tell you frankly that I have not thought of it."

"Very good ; don't bother about it. He will understand, you will see him no more."

I said to myself, "Poor prince, see how well you have been recompensed." He had no love for me; his heart will not be broken, but he will have the right to think me very ungrateful. However, it is not my fault, and I can't blame the Consul—he is right. Every man of delicacy would act thus. Alas! will it be for my happiness? Let us hope on and follow the road blindly, wherever it may lead.

The Consul was more tender than the evening before, and more pressing. I was anxious and quivering. I dare not say my modesty, since I had come of my own accord. He loaded me with tenderness, but with such delicacy, with such a restrained ardour, always respecting the modest emotions of a young girl whom he did not wish to force, but to lead to him by a sweet and tender sentiment without violence. My heart experienced an unknown feeling; it beat with force. I was attracted in spite of myself. I loved the great man who was surrounding me with such consideration, who was not rough in his desires, who waited the will of a child and bowed to her caprices.

"See, Georgina, let me love you altogether; I want you to have complete confidence. It is true you scarcely know me, but it needs but a minute to love; one feels all at once the electric movement which strikes you at the same time. Tell me, do you love me a little?"

"Certainly I love you, not only a little; I am afraid of loving you too much, and therefore of

being very unhappy. You have too much greatness within you for your heart to nurse a lively affection for anything but glory. Poor women are soon taken and very soon forgotten. For you they are a plaything which amuses you a little more or a little less. Although you may be the First Consul, I do not intend to be a plaything."

"But if you are my favourite plaything, you won't complain, I hope. No mistrust, Georgina; you would annoy me."

"Very well, I will come again to-morrow."

"You see how weak I am to allow you to leave without having given me a proof of abandonment, which leaves us no longer strangers to each other. Go, then, Georgina, till to-morrow."

"Ah! I was forgetting; I am playing Cinna."

"All the better; I will be present at the performance. Look your best. After *Cinna* the carriage will wait for you."

"But I shall be tired."

"Come, Georgina, this time I will see you after *Cinna*, and you will yield to my desire, or I will never see you again."

"I will come."

Great tears were in my eyes.

"You are crying; you see quite well that you love me a little, you silly little thing!"

He dried my great tears, embraced me, and said—

"Till to-morrow, my dear Georgina."

As a matter of fact *Cinna* was played: nothing had been changed. At quarter-past seven I came

on the stage, and the Consul had not arrived. It is to punish me that he is absent. "Ah, well, if he does not come I shall not go to-morrow to Saint-Cloud. I am not a slave; I belong to myself. I am my own, my own alone, Heaven be thanked. Ah, how well I did to resist! It was a caprice, and nothing more. My dear Consul, you see that I have my will too, and that, although only a mere girl, I know how not to bow my head before power. All the better; I am free, and breathe more freely." But I felt I was choking while uttering my monologue. "Uttering" is the word, the only word suitable. I was detestable, absurd, and the haughty Émilie was very humbled. It is extraordinary all that can pass in the head of an actress while playing, while she is the character, at any rate in appearance; for other thoughts assail you, turning you into a machine; one exaggerates one's part, and sometimes deceives the public.

At the end of my monologue I heard a noise in the house and frantic applause; it was the Consul. Ah! how I breathed with happiness. There was a cry of "Begin again," which always happened when the First Consul was late. I began again, but this time my heart was filled with joy and intoxication, but quite in keeping with my part. The good public must have said, "Halloa! it seems that the presence of our great man inspires her more than this full house."

The Consul was very fond of the tragedy of *Cinna*.

The performance of this work was magnificently played by Talma and Monvel; Monvel was so simple and noble as Augustus. Talk of diction! *He* knew the secret of putting emotion in his diction. How that man recited Corneille!

Without a powerful voice, and almost without voice at all, he could be heard everywhere. Further, what an admiring silence when he was on the stage. How tragic and simple he was in his monologue in the fourth act, when, I think, Évandre had just acquainted him of Cinna's treachery, and how in the monologue he recapitulated all his actions and ended by saying—

*“Rentré en toi-même, Octave, et souffre des ingrats,
Après l'avoir été!”*

Après l'avoir été was said with such indefinable feeling. There was in those few words all his remorse; it produced a tragic effect. And again in the same monologue, when he awakes, and at last wishes to be avenged on the ingrate, he philosophises, saying—

“Eh quoi, toujours du sang et toujours des supplices!”

The word “*sang*” was said in a stifled voice, with an expression of disgust about the lips. He dropped into a chair in a tired, exhausted way—

“Ma cruauté se lasse!”

(*Dear Valmore, I haven't “Cinna” by me. You will have it in your artistic memory, and arrange it*

as a man of taste who understands beautiful things. I think it a good idea to insert these details before my third visit to Saint-Cloud.)

And the scene which opens the fifth act between Augustus and Cinna. He entered first, very agitated. Cinna follows. Chairs are put ready. Monvel took his with a trembling hand.

“Prends un siège, Cinna.”

And on Cinna's hesitation he begins again—

“Prends . . .”

What a prodigious effect! Ah! I was there, palpitating, all ears like the public for that matter. Then there are the lines which follow the famous *Prends*—

*“Sur toute chose,
Observe exactement la loi que je t'impose.”*

From the beginning of this scene his utterance was short, incisive, and even impetuous. When he reminded Cinna of the favours with which he had loaded him, and said—

“Cinna, tu t'en souviens, et veux m'assassiner.”

Cinna, who then wishes to get up, was restrained by Monvel—

“Tu tiens mal ta parole. Sieds toi.”

It is impossible to render the effect. When he named all the conspirators he counted them on his fingers, those magical fingers from which a flame

issued from every joint; to count on the fingers without exciting laughter, but on the contrary to make everybody shudder, is pushing art beyond all imagination. Then when, after having shown Cinna all his baseness and ingratitude, he finished that exquisite dialogue by saying—

“ Parle, parle, il est temps,”—

I do not think it is possible for any other actor to reach a like perfection, so true and intelligent, and all without a cry or an exaggeration. Ah! sublime Monvel, your reputation is much beneath your immense talent. Shall injustice always rule?

Talma, in this pusillanimous and wavering character, now brave now weak, moved under the influence of his passion for Émilie, and acted against the promptings of his heart.

What a fine first entry Talma had! All the beautiful and lengthy recital was made in a low voice, and when he reached these lines—

*“ Le frère tout dégoûtant du meurtre de son père,
Et, sa tête à la main, demandant son salaire,”—*

what an expression! He trembled in every fibre! He stretched forward his right hand, which actually held a head, then bringing the other hand almost beneath the bleeding head, demanded his reward. There was an effect so terribly true that I have often seen women shrink with fright.

That, I think, is talent; but those who have not

seen it will not believe so. They are right ; they have not seen it and they will not. To-day the old traditions are turned into ridicule, and no one attempts the impossible. How is one to talk colour to a blind man ?

Tragedies were not then surrounded with elaborate scenery. They were even gloomy and neglected. People were wrong. The fault was certainly not Talma's, as he appreciated and understood classicism better than any one. How many times I have seen him in righteous wrath against this bad taste and stinginess. "You make us look like fools with your paltry meanness !" Poor Talma, he was so much in love with classicism that he wanted to re-establish the chorus in *Œdipus*. "Music elevates the soul and poetises it ; but to speak of it to those dunderheads is trouble lost."

"See," he said to me, "how they are encrusted in their old habits. They think I am introducing a red cap when I speak of innovations so necessary to our art."

But if the *mise en scène* was neglected in such a mean way, the distribution of works was not.

Dalmas was a brilliant actor, who met with great applause, caused by an intrepid warmth, which astonished and attracted a public carried away by so much volubility, asking itself afterwards, "Why did I applaud so much ? I do not know why, but it is a fact I did not applaud Talma when he said in such a simple and touching manner—

" 'C'est Oreste, ma sœur . . . '

I had tears in my eyes, and yet I did not applaud. Do I like the drum better than the nightingale? Really I am a brute."

Dalmas was not without talent, but—I repeat it with regret—it was a careless talent. However, he kept to his part of *jeune premier*, and did not disdain to play Maxime, a part of small effect, almost completely effaced by Cinna and Augustus. The secondary characters, although it must be confessed they were very mediocre in those times, would not have dared to get themselves replaced. The works in this respect were mounted as well as possible.

This evening—and the presence of the Consul had much to do with it—the effect of the performance was magnificent. I do not speak of myself. In the midst of the marvellous and immense talent of those giants, I did my best not to cast a shadow on the picture. So I had the flattering reward of my efforts. But applause came to me at the fifth act, which I was far from expecting, at the line—

"Si j'ai séduit Cinna, j'en séduirai bien d'autres."

This line was applauded three times. I became purple. Heavens! what did it all mean? Something is presumed! They can't know anything. The First Consul comes very often, and perhaps they think . . . That would be awful! Are Court secrets to be like stage ones? What will the Consul say to me? He will be furious, and perhaps will

accuse me of indiscretion, although I have confided in no one but Talma. He is too prudent and timid to have opened his mouth about it, even to his wife.

Talma followed me into my box quite disturbed.

"Well, you see! Did you hear the applause?"

"Yes, and I am confused and disturbed by it. If only the Consul does not accuse me of indiscretion! After all, I don't care much; the public perhaps wanted to pay me a gracious compliment. Be off with you, Talma; I am waited for."

I got into the carriage, and here I am for the third time on the way to Saint-Cloud. The Consul was waiting for me.

"The performance was very good," he said. "Talma was truly sublime. Monvel is quite a profound actor; unfortunately nature has been grudging to him. It is impossible to have a great reputation with such a defective voice and miserable figure. The stage is ideality, and one does not want to see badly-made heroes. Monvel combats his defects by science, but the charm is absent. He is an actor to study. You were very good, too, Georgina."

"I did my best to deserve your approval, which is most flattering to me."

"Eh, what! Are you going to play the flatterer?"

"I am trying to become a great lady."

"You are trying to become naughty. Be what you are, I like you better as Georgina than a countess."

He overwhelmed me with kindness.

“Come and sit beside me. You are a little fatigued. Come, rid yourself of the shawl and the hat, that you may be seen.”

He undressed me little by little. He acted the lady's-maid with such gaiety, with such grace and decency, that one had to yield in spite of oneself. How could one not be fascinated and attracted to such a man? He became small and childish to please me. He was no longer the Consul; he was, perhaps, a man in love, but whose love had neither violence nor roughness. He embraced you sweetly, and his words were tender and modest. Beside him it was impossible not to experience what he experienced himself.

I separated from the Consul at seven in the morning; but ashamed of the charming disorder the night had caused, I quite showed my embarrassment.

“Let me make it tidy.”

“Yes, my good Georgina, I will even help you.”

And he had the kindness to pretend to arrange the couch with me, that witness of so much forgetfulness and tenderness.

(Ouf! Really, good Madame Valmore, it wants a pen like yours to marshal these historical and still very true details. I have done what I can, but I am powerless.)

The Consul said to me, “Good-bye till to-morrow, Georgina.” He said to-morrow doubtless to calm my uneasiness—another proof of his delicacy. No, those who will read these details

will never believe them ; but they are real. To know the great man thoroughly it was necessary to see him in intimacy ; there, despoiled of his immense thoughts, he pleased himself with all the little details of simple and human life ; he rested from fatigue and himself.

“ No, not to-morrow, if you permit, but the day after to-morrow.”

“ Yes, my dear Georgina, just as you wish ; the day after to-morrow. Love me a little, and tell me that you will come gladly.”

“ I love you with all my soul ; I am afraid of loving you too much. You are not made for me, I know, and I shall suffer ; that is written—you will see !”

“ Bah ! you prophesy badly ; I shall always be good to you. But we haven't got as far as that. Kiss me and be happy.”

Here I am launched into a lively existence, sweet for the moment, but which will cause me plenty of grief. I shall be always in doubt, and perhaps jealous. Jealous of a man whom you can only see when he consents ! Yes, one is envied the honour—one calls that honour !—of being noticed by the Consul ! It is grand ! It is splendid ! But at bottom it is sad. It would be much better to be loved by one's equal ; one can agree and dispute at one's ease, and there is no imperial door to forbid one the entry without the order of the master. Yes, it is sad, it is heartrending ; it is slavery with golden chains. After the third and definite

interview was over—"Come the day after to-morrow." It is gilded slavery.

Here I am in a new era. Receive my farewells, young girl, without cares, without any other passion but theatrical glory; you return a woman to the home which only last evening heard your peals of childish laughter. You return with a heart in love; prepare yourself, then, for all the torments of that feeling we call love, which nearly always is the tomb of all our illusions and all our dreams.

I returned home sad; I felt I loved the Consul. He sent Constant for news of me, and to remind me of my promise for the morrow. I did not go out that day; my door was closed to everybody except my faithful Talma, who did not fail to come post-haste.

"Well, did he talk to you about the frightful applause at the line—

"Si j'ai séduit Cinna, j'en séduirai bien d'autres" ?

"He never said a word to me about it; but he thought you sublime, my dear Talma. How well the Consul talks about tragedy! What good advice he gives. He considers you a tragedian from head to foot. As for me, I don't understand it like he does; but this I can say, that during your speech in the first act I have shivers which run down all my limbs, and if the public were not entirely under the influence of your accents and could turn its eyes away, it would see me grow

pale, and would read in my face the profound impression you were producing on me.”

“You are giving me a great eulogy.”

“My Talma, that is what I feel when I listen to you. I am no more in the theatre, I assure you ; you transport me to Rome.”

“You ought to be happy after what you have just told me ; one doesn’t have for a woman for whom one only experiences a fancy, all the tender and delicate care and the patience he had. He spoils you ; you will find no one like him.”

“I only know too well, Talma, that I love him, and you see that is very disturbing.”

“When do you see him again ?”

“To-morrow. He wanted to see me to-day, but at my prayer . . .”

“What a lot of women would like to be in your place. Be discreet, I beg you ; let there not be the least reproach made against you. The Consul likes decency in everything. It will be known, perhaps it is already known ; I believe so, but it is not through you.”

Talma had a very prying glance ; I saw him look at me.

“What have you got in your ears ?”

“Ah ! I forgot. They are two diamond earrings which the Consul placed in my ears two days ago, the day after my first interview. ‘Take them, my dear Georgina ; I have crushed everything of yours : it is right I should replace all the damage I have done.’”

“But those gems are superb.”

“Certainly they are magnificent, but the manner in which they were given was finer still. Another would have had the bad taste to send them to me; but he—that is another matter. How can one help him? Decidedly, Talma, I am mad over him.”

“You do well: I even think it reasonable. Come this evening to the theatre.”

“I am not keen about it.”

“Why?”

“Because I am very pale.”

“You never have any colour, you flirt. You know quite well that pallor suits you. You are just as usual. Come, we will talk about him. Ah! I love him too, you see.”

So I went to the Français. Talma had not yet arrived. I went down into the theatre. We had a green-room there where we kept the materials for our make-up, our pins, and glass of water. There were several comfortable chairs round the room, and there the women sat and quizzed each other unsparingly. When one quitted her place to go on the stage another filled it quickly. Mars was playing that day in *le Philosophe sans le Savoir*. She was certainly the most ravishing figure one could possibly see; she looked fifteen in her little white dress and green apron. She was admirable in Victoirine, from beginning to end displaying an ingenuity and dramatic style which would put present dramas in the shade. Her

triumphs were equal to her talents, so her charming companions had some difficulty in discovering a defect ; unable to criticise her talent, they already dared to speak about her age.

“ Ah, will she never leave off her green apron ? ” said Bourgoïn. “ I shall never be able to come up to her. You will see she will play little girls till she is sixty. As for me, I shall be at the hospital for incurables.”

Mlle. Contat—Contat, the witty and great lady, who did not disdain to play the aunt, and made a complete rôle from the little part screamingly funny—was listening to Bourgoïn. The good Contat had a mischievous wit. She had no very tender affection for Mlle. Mars, but was too perfect a comédienne not to do her justice.

“ You would do well, little one, to go into the house to study closely, and take a lesson which might, perhaps, be useful to you. Try to imitate Mars ; imitate, I say, because you could never, never replace her. You will put yourself in her place, and you will do so to a disadvantage. Her proper and distinguished manners belong to her alone, and you could not take them away. Appreciate her parts ; that is permitted to you. But to play them, little one !—ah, renounce that folly ! Neither you nor the others will ever replace Mars in cleverness.”

After this little dialogue Mlle. Contat went on the stage.

“ Dear me, how rude the fat creature is ! All

those old things hold their heads up. When I am as old as you, you rude old thing, I shall have as much talent as you, see ! If her dear Mars wanted to play her part, the old stroller wouldn't think her so wonderful. That person is thoroughly spoiled ; she has so often been told that she has grand manners, that she fancies herself Mme. de Pompadour. I must go, because it will be my scene.

“ ‘ *Achille, noble fils de vingt rois. Viens avec ta mère.* ’ ”

(*All this, dear, is stupid and doubtless in bad taste ; but I heard it all. Do what you like with it. Besides, it is the second of January, and I am in a very bad temper.*)

Everybody laughed.

“ Why didn't you answer her ? ” said Mère Thénard.¹ “ You hung back. You ought to have told her what you thought of her.”

“ That's all very well, but I should have been fined.”

“ True, but you would have had your consolation.”

“ I should have had to pay a hundred francs ; thanks, it is too dear. Believe me, I shall be even with her yet without a fine. Ah, there's George,

¹ Thénard, mère (Marie-Magdelaine-Claudine Chevalier-Perrin), born at Voiron in Dauphiné, December 11, 1757 ; made her début, October 1, 1777 ; had a fresh début, May 26, 1781 ; received the first of June following ; réunion generale, May 30, 1799 ; retired, April 1, 1819 ; died in Paris, December 20, 1849 (Georges Monval, etc.).

who is new here ; she says nothing. I suppose you are afraid of the fat creature, George ? ”

“ I afraid ? Not at all ; but I like and admire Mlle. Mars, so I could not agree with what you said. I held my tongue ; it seemed to be the best thing to do. Besides, I don’t care for arguments.”

“ Dear me, here’s some one who is already becoming politic ! ”

The poor Bourgoïn was wrong to call me a politic. I understood very imperfectly what was passing around me. I was far away from the little green-room, where all the annoyances of the wings and little feminine jealousies went on. I was waiting for Talma. Mars, on leaving the stage, came and sat right opposite me.

“ Good-evening, George ; how are you ? ”

“ Very well, thanks ; and how are you ? ”

“ I ? Just so-so. I am not much in form, and should be glad to be finished. Heavens ! George, the brilliant rays your ears throw out hurt my eyes.”

“ My ears hurt you ? You are joking.”

“ Not your ears, but your diamond earrings.”

“ Ah ! ”

I put my hand to my ears ; I had forgotten to remove them. I was troubled ; I felt that hints and gossip were proceeding apace.

“ Take them out and let me look at them closer.”

“ I can’t take them out ; you see them well enough. Diamond earrings are not very curious.”

“But those are so enormous ; you are wearing a king’s ransom in your ears.”

“Neither king nor ransom. Some diamonds were brought to me, and I liked them, and I was given time to pay for them. That is all ! You would have done the same. You like nice things when you can get them. Besides, everybody likes them, and women especially.”

“Yes, yes, my dear George ; but you will want a great deal of time to pay for those enormous gems.”

“Don’t bother yourself about it. I swear I won’t charge you with the payment of the debt, which perhaps you would undertake with pleasure. You are such a good comrade !”

(Good Valmore, this little scene passed as I tell it. I gave Mars a little rap, but we have painted her so favourably that it is not necessary to keep silence about this anecdote.)

Mars had guessed everything. What was to be done ? After all, rumours are to be expected. I can do nothing, let come what may. Such a fearful position would be intolerable.

“Ah ! Talma, here you are at last. Come, let us get away as quickly as possible from all this envious gossip.”

“What’s the matter, then ?” says Talma, taking my arm.

“What’s the matter ? The matter is, your sharp Mars discovered beneath my hat the gems which I had thoughtlessly left in my ears, and for half-an-hour she placed me on the rack to learn

where such a magnificent present could come from."

"Well, what do you expect? You ought to understand that secrecy is impossible."

"You must see, Talma, that I was right to dread this happiness. It is happiness to think that one is loved by this man, but it is a happiness which will always be troubled. I give myself no illusions, good Talma; it is a lost and tortuous existence. Once separated from the Consul, nothing and nobody will please me. He is the First Consul, but to me he is nothing more than a man, charming with his grace and his thousand little attentions, which try to make you forget his power and render you completely happy. How can one help being proud and sad when one thinks that everything ends? I am going home. My carriage is here; take me to it. You will have a cup of tea, and the carriage shall take you home."

"Gladly."

Dear Talma, he was really good-natured; besides, he knew quite well that I should not miss the chance of talking of *him*.

"Do you know that women are very spiteful? You men have none of these miserable petty jealousies. A new jewel brings all of them to their feet. They devour you with their eyes. They scrutinise right down into your heart, to try and guess what is passing there. It is really a toil which I think I shall never be able to stoop to. What does it matter to me, if they have beautiful

things? All the better for the envious creatures. No, dear Talma, I don't think this vice will come to me."

"You will speak differently, perhaps, later on, when you are no longer young."

"No. When I am no longer young, I shall love youth, and I shall like to rest my eyes on beautiful people. They will pass, like me, those young girls so fresh and rosy; they will resign themselves, like me, to becoming old and even ugly. They will hear people tell them, 'Ah! you were very, very beautiful.' *You were* is frightful. That shameless compliment should be erased. Now-a-days I often hear that compliment, and, as beauty is rather rare, I reply, 'You are fortunate, my dear; you have never had that to regret. That is a consolation.'"

The next day I saw the Consul, who received me with the same eagerness and kindness. He liked me to tell him all that had been said of me, and all the little intrigues of behind the scenes.

"Come, Georgina, tell me everything."

"Well, yesterday I was very tormented by Mlle. Mars. I had your gems in my ears, and curiosity and questions were not lacking. I fear they guess where they come from, but I assure you I am very discreet."

"Never mind; let them talk, let them suppose; I shall not blame you for it. Always be good-natured, dear Georgina, that is the best quality a woman can have."

The Emperor has been given a reputation for rudeness. It is a calumny joined to so many others, and to so many lies, that shoulders will be shrugged, and, as they read these memoirs, people will say, "Bah, this is all incredible; she embellishes!" Believe it or not, dear readers, as you like. I speak the *truth*, the very truth. I do not embellish or invent at all. I say that the Emperor was, to me at least, gentle and gay, and even childish. The hours with him passed without our heeding, and day came to astonish us.

On leaving I longed to return. And I did not have long to wait. The days seemed mortally long. Everybody knew what I was so desirous of hiding. I received people who came to recommend themselves to me.

"I am unable to do what you desire; I know no Minister and have no influence."

"If you would only see the Minister of the Interior, you would obtain what I solicit. I should be grateful."

"What do you mean?"

"In offering you what you might like."

"I want nothing. See, your proposition displeases me, and decides me to see the Minister. I will try and obtain what you want, and you will see if I sell the services I should be happy to give. We artistes have not, thank God, venal souls."

I was received by the Minister, who promised to examine the request I presented to him.

“Here is a card which will allow you to present yourself without asking for an audience.”

I left, charmed by such a gracious reception. Was I received so kindly on my own account, or because of the rumours which were running about ? It doesn't matter. Let us turn it to account by doing a little good, if it is possible. When one has been poor, one must not forget or repel those whom one can succour. There are so many people who make fabulous fortunes and forget their origin, because they possess laughable luxury ; yes, really laughable ; in spite of their liveries, one soon recognises their transformation. You may strut or smirk as you like in your carriages, which you want to rival those of the Court, you will always be recognised. You are disguised, that is all. You are foolishly proud ; money troubles you, poor people ; but money will not give you the distinction you are running after. Away with this stupid pretension, You are intelligent men, men of money ; remain men of money. Look after it well, for if you should lose it, you will know your true merit.

If the rumours day by day took more consistency, it was, it must be said, partly the Consul's fault. It was well known that the performance preferred by the Consul was tragedy ; the severe style pleased him. He would not have let the masterpieces be placed on one side, which now are a little too despised. Alas ! they are right ; who could play them ? Doubtless he came too often, which gave rise to all the rumours. Great men

have their weaknesses, too, but one does not wish them to have them. People get angry and always will with those who govern. The world is made so, and will continue so. It is just like the actors, who are ceaselessly enemies of their manager. Power is a difficult and hard thing to control.

One day the Consul said to me—

“Georgina, if you like, Constant will come and fetch you at nine in the morning; then we will go together to Butard, a hunting-place a little way from Saint-Cloud.”

“That is pretty early.”

“Lazybones! You will get up a little sooner, which will be good for you. Then at last I shall see you in the beautiful sunshine.”

“Yes, at the beginning of October there is very little sun.”

“There will be on that day.”

“Very well, I will come, since you promise me the sun.”

During the first fortnight he had satisfied my scrupulous delicacy, and I dare say my modesty, in repairing the disorder of the nights and pretending to re-make the bed. He dressed me, and put on my stockings, and as I had garters with buckles, which made him impatient, he had some round garters made for me, to be passed over the foot.

(I give you these details crudely, because you told me to put everything on paper, dear good Madame Valmore. I obey. How will you select from it? You only are capable of making such thorny details

pass. For instance, could you say that the Emperor's sleep was as calm as a child's, and his breathing soft ; that his awakening was charming, with a sweet smile on his lips ; that he rested his noble and handsome head on my bosom, and nearly always slept so, and that I, young as I was, made some almost philosophical reflections on seeing the man who commanded the world thus abandon himself completely in the arms of a young girl. Oh ! he knew quite well that I would let myself be killed for him.

All these details are for you, dear Valmore : I should be confused if your dear son were to read them. The Emperor's love was sweet. There was nothing shameless in the most intimate moments, and no obscene words. He made charming remarks : " Do you love me, Georgina ? Are you happy to be in my arms ? I am going to sleep, too." All this is true ; but how is it to be told ? You have the secret of making people understand delicately ; as for me, I am nothing but a brute, more particularly still when I am mastered by the absence of money, which happens to me very often, and, above all, at this moment, when I am raging against those who have it and keep it.)

I was fetched away, then, at nine o'clock in the morning. It was fine, but cold. I put on a white silk quilted wrap, such as was in fashion at the time, and black satin shoes : boots were unknown, which was a pity, for they are both pretty and useful ; then I threw over my head a long veil.

Was I going to be foolish enough to go out without a hat in the month of October?

"But, mademoiselle," said Clémentine to me, "do put on a hat. Here is one that suits you very well."

"Do you think so? I think I look like a marchioness with her Sunday clothes on. I don't care about it. Besides, the Consul wants to see me in the sunlight. Well, he shall see me: I will disguise none of my face."

Here we are at Saint-Cloud. The carriage was stopped behind the wall which overlooks Sèvres. Constant got down and returned more than a quarter of an hour afterwards to tell me—

"I made a mistake. The Consul was furious with me and said, 'Idiot, I have been waiting for an hour.' The Consul had a gun to make it be believed he was going shooting. 'Go and wait for me at Butard. I will return to change, and shall be there as soon as you. Only I won't take the road with her, silly idiot that you are.'"

(This was told me word for word by Constant.)

As a matter of fact I arrived first, and entered a pavilion in the midst of a garden more or less full of little trees. First I found a good fire, and then lunch ready spread. The Consul arrived ten minutes afterwards on horseback, followed by four *aides-de-camp*: General Caulaincourt, Junot, Bessières, and Lauriston, who has often talked to me about that morning.

(It is for you, good Valmore, to find out if

Lauriston was there at that time. Could Lauriston have lied? I don't think so. Of Junot and Caulaincourt, as well as Bessières, I am certain, but I am not so sure about him.)

The Consul entered alone, and said to me—

“Well! you understand about that silly thing Constant mistaking the place I had fixed upon, and kept me waiting an hour with gun in hand. That’s the reason why I did not accompany you.”

“Oh, don’t scold him, I beg of you. Poor Constant is so confused and unhappy: pardon him. Warm yourself: you must be tired.”

“Not at all: we came at a good gallop.”

“Take something.”

He rang for Constant, who entered with lowered head and a very red face.

“Some coffee, and, Georgina, won’t you take something?”

“A little coffee, too, if you please.”

“Is that all?”

“Yes, that is all.”

“At last I see you in daylight; it is not unfavourable to you.”

“You are very good to think so, but I think I am horribly ugly.”

“Come, come: no false modesty. You know quite differently. Ah! my dear, there are so many women who deceive you by candlelight: and you theatrical people with your rouge are practically masked. But to rise at nine and drive three leagues in the country is an ordeal, and

you have sustained it victoriously. You are just as I desired to see you."

"You look at me with indulgent eyes: I am very grateful to you, and thank you again."

"Come, let us take a little walk in the wood."

He gave me his arm, and we passed before the four *aides-de-camp* drawn up in a line in the courtyard, with lowered helmets. The Consul raised my veil, which caused me to lower my head, because I was so flushed and confused. Perhaps any one else would have been proud. It is possible—and there was something to be proud about—but I, whether it was modesty, or lack of intelligence, or of boldness, was trembling and ashamed. All this happened as I am relating. I walked arm-in-arm with the first man in the world. Yes, *amour propre* ought to be satisfied, and it was. How many times in the midst of my tribulations and disappointments I recalled that walk. It is all the same—they can't take away that; I have been for more than two hours arm-in-arm with the master of the world. I have no fortune, and am poor, but rich in recollections; and no speculation can rob you of them and no power can take them away. They are there before me as fresh, and as young and palpitating as if it was yesterday. In the midst of so much suffering I consider myself happy to have preserved my young impressions. One ages less quickly. If I have trodden money beneath my feet, as much as people say, it was because I have always

despised it. I despise it still more now that it has become a matter of such importance. Yes, Mister Money, I despise you. Think what you like about that, it is of little consequence to me. I tell you, Money, my opinion : I owe you no obligation. I am free and upright before you. Don't expect me ever to bow before your ingots.

The dear Consul ! How charming and gay he was during that walk ! He made me run, as it was cold. The paths were covered with dead leaves and dry branches, which got in my way and caught in my feet. The Consul took care to clear them away and give me a freer passage. *He* gave himself that trouble !

"Please don't stoop so ; I don't want you to, or else I shall go in."

"I don't want you to hurt your feet. Let me do it."

(This is historical.)

These details are true. Would any one believe them ? There are so few men capable of these delicate attentions. Oh ! yes, I have never met his equal. Besides, in another it would seem simple and natural. But in *him* ! ah, that is quite another thing !

"I want to return. I am tired, and, in spite of our race, a little cold."

So we returned.

"You must have some tea to warm you before leaving."

We remained another hour together, then the carriage was ordered. The Consul accompanied me to it and saw me in.

“We will meet soon, Georgina, at the Tuileries, I am leaving Saint-Cloud to-morrow.”

He mounted his horse and passed us quickly, just coming to the door to say once more to me, “*A bientôt.*”

(On that day an individual who had received orders to attack the Emperor was arrested. I rely on my dear Valmore to look up the details of this incident.)

Constant left me at Saint-Cloud, and I returned home about six. My life in the midst of all this grandeur was not what I had imagined it. Yes, certainly I am happy when I am with the Consul, but will my illusion let me go as far as flattering myself that it will last? Every moment there is uncertainty. I live under a will which will crush me as soon as satiety comes, and I shall have no right to complain. Well, let us live this frivolous life, since I consented to do it. I am subjected to the chances of happiness or unhappiness. Forward, then, and let us learn not to stray too much: that is all I can hope for myself. I am an actress and independent. I could, if I liked, give up seeing the Consul, and say to him, “I don’t wish to come.” I have my will also, and he would have no right to constrain it. I am free! This thought makes me happy, and I see everything under another aspect. Now I feel happy; if I

go on it is because I wish to, because I like to.

I saw very few people and made few visits. When I went out there was always a wretched cab behind my carriage, and when I thought it had stopped following me, it still kept on. I amused myself in letting it run smartly : it used to make such comical halts.

M. de Talleyrand, whom I saw a good deal, and who was very fond of me—how these great and witty personages, bored with their grandeur, amuse themselves with everything and interest themselves in nothing, and how they take you up and drop you without thinking of you ; you serve as a plaything to them without your knowing it—kept on tormenting me to consent to hold a reception twice a week.

“ Whom shall I receive then ? ” I said to him. “ Your company, prince among men ? What an honour to have said, ‘ Are you going to George’s this evening ? There is a good company of men there ! ’ No, my dear prince, I am very grateful for the honour you wish to do me, but, let me tell you, I find it a humiliating honour. I am an artiste, and I want to live in my own world. You laugh, prince ? Yes, *my* world. I think, and always have thought, this pretension to receptions very ridiculous, because it is written the ladies of high society cannot call on actresses—and in that I approve ; let each keep to her own—and let actresses have sufficient self-respect to remain in their own sphere !

“Let them live among artistes and men of letters who do not despise them, but, on the contrary, search them out. You know, prince, that artistic society is much more lively and instructive—I do not say that for you, who are a prodigy of knowledge and wit—and you know quite well that this world suits us. The praises of Gérard, who has much wit, too; of Talma, who certainly has genius as well; of our great painter, David; of Contat, the marvellous actress; of Mars, Fleury, Monvel; their praises are more precious than the courtly compliments of great lords. In speaking of all these artistes, you see I become animated and am not so much of a stupid. In the midst of your society I should not find a word to say. You see quite well I am right to refuse you. You approve, I can see, and I am grateful to you for it. Besides, society composed of men is not amusing, and if some lady artistes were to be admitted to your exclusively masculine circle, what would be said? I leave you to imagine. In fact, that might indeed compromise you. At last you laugh heartily; you bear me no rancour. I will come and see you whenever you allow it; that will always be an honour and a pleasure to me. If you deign to honour me with a visit, I shall then be proud of it.”

“Yes; I will come. I am glad to have heard you speak thus; it does you credit. Yes, my beautiful Georgina, I will come and see you; count on it.”

“Come with the good Giamboni, he is a friend

of yours. He often visits me, and every evening he is behind the scenes."

(All this is true.)

Next day I told the Emperor everything, and he approved.

"That devil, Talleyrand, what is he interfering for? He wants everybody to limp like himself; he loves to upset all simple and quiet existences. He is a jobber, my dear Georgina. You were right, I should have scolded you if you had consented to entertain."

"Yes, I was right, was I not? I should have been there to serve the refreshments, and I am not sufficiently complaisant to hand cups of tea. Besides, I would never consent to the least thing without telling you, because you are so kind and indulgent as to let me tell you everything. What happens to me is very insignificant, but sometimes all these nothings can distract you, and I am very happy when I see you smile. You laugh so well that you make me forget that it is you. It is charming to put oneself on a level with an ordinary person. It is a transformation which ought to make your life lighter for some minutes."

(Dear friend, I think a lot of these trifling remarks and of this conversation which took place between the Consul and me.)

When great men wish to make themselves amiable, one has to confess that they succeed better than the average individual, and so they spoil one for the future. It is egotism, I am

tempted to believe, intended to force you to regrets; comparison will always leave a recollection, and that will happen to me. And self-love, whoever be the man, whatever be his rank, dominates him before everything else.

The Consul was kindness itself to me, and often condescended to speak about the manner in which I had played, and his criticisms were always perfect.

“Georgina, I don’t find you sufficiently in love in Aménaïde. I know quite well that Voltaire made the person a little too much of a virago, but still she is passionate and almost madly in love, and I consider you a little cold.”

“Well, I assure you I do all I can. But what can you expect? I don’t feel myself at ease as I do in my maternal rôles.”

“Yes, you seem to feel maternity most profoundly. Well, my dear Georgina, you must become a mother.”

“If that could be, how happy I should be. How nice my little one would be. What beautiful dresses and pretty little bonnets he would have. Oh, stop! I mustn’t think about it. I should become mad with joy.”

Alas! I was wrong to give myself up to a thought which did not *engross me only*, for I remember having been sent by *him*, who desired to see this wish accomplished, to a woman who lived in the faubourg Saint-Antoine, who showed the way to become a mother. An unfruitful way

for me, alas ! What an existence was promised me if I had not been smitten with barrenness !

One evening the Emperor summoned me to Saint-Cloud very early. It was rather cold, and there was a fire in the library, where he received me. I ought to remember that fire ! The Consul began to play with me just like a real child. We sat down on the carpet. Then he climbed the small ladder to be found in libraries. He wanted to take *Phèdre* and make me read her declaration, which bored me horribly, so much so that every time he was just going to take the book, I wheeled the ladder into the middle of the library. He laughed and climbed down, and gave me some little smacks on the cheek, a very tenderly made correction.

(I do not know, dear friends, if I have ever told you these simple details, which do not become less charming on the part of that immense man.)

“Decidedly you don’t want to recite *Phèdre* for me ?”

“No, I am not inclined to. Let us talk, please ; I like that better.”

“Very well, feather-brain.”

We sat down again on the carpet

“Well, dear Georgina, I am going to leave you. I set out at four o’clock in the morning.”

“What, you are leaving ?”

“Yes, for several days. You see what confidence I have in you, madcap ; nobody knows of it. Well, you don’t seem very afflicted at my departure.”

Really, I felt he was right. I would have given anything to squeeze a tear, but I have never been lachrymose. Besides, it is better to be frank, I really did not want to cry. Ah! I can never efface from my memory or my heart the Consul's gesture, as he placed his hand on my heart and drew it back quickly.

"Ah! there is nothing for me in that heart."

I was in torture. I turned my head to the fire and said not a word; my eyes were fixed stupidly on the blazing fire and the fire-irons, which shone like the sun. At last my staring eyes, doubtless fatigued with the glare, grew moist, and squeezed out some helpful tears. The Consul saw them, and his charm equalled my confusion. He began to drink them and kiss them away in his delight. I left him in the error. It was very, very wrong, I confess, but he was so joyful that it would have been cruel to disabuse him. Besides, I loved him, so I did not deceive him really.

(Arrange all that, dear, but what I write is so clear to me still that it seems to have happened yesterday, May 27, 1857.)

The Consul, always kind and considerate, said to me, "I don't want my Georgina to be without money in my absence," and he filled my lap with bank-notes.

(Valmore, look up the date he set out for the camp at Boulogne. It is very essential to see to the dates to prove the truth of this tale. I have

already told you : “ *The Emperor never sent money by anybody, he always gave it himself.*”)

We took leave of each other at three in the morning. I was very moved when he said to me—

“ Good-bye, Georgina, be good, and we will meet soon.”

How strange it was. I hadn't wept at all before him, but once in the carriage I burst into tears. It was quite useless for Constant, the kind and ungrateful Constant, to say—

“ Don't cry ; it is only an absence of a few days. I will tell the Consul how unreasonable you were, and that you did nothing but cry all the way.”

“ Yes, tell him that, Constant, so that he may know my devotion and how much I love him. But shall I see him again ? ”

NOTE BY THE EDITOR.—Mlle. George has also made rather a different tale of the scene which she has just related. Here is the second version—

Before leaving Saint-Cloud I forgot an interview which I am going to tell you just as it happened. I was fetched at eight in the evening, and arrived at Saint-Cloud, and in the evening went into the apartment near the bedroom. It was the first time I had seen that apartment, which was the library. The Consul came at once.

“ I got you to come much earlier, Georgina, as I wanted to see you before my departure.”

“ Heavens ! are you leaving ? ”

“ Yes ; at eleven to-morrow morning, for Boulogne. No one knows it yet.”

We were seated quite simply on the carpet.

“ Well, aren't you sorry ? ”

“ Yes, of course I am sorry.”

“ Don't you experience any pain in seeing me go away ? ”

He placed his hand on my heart and pretended to tear it out, saying to me in a half-angry, half-tender tone—

“ There is nothing for me in this heart.”

Those were his very words. I was on the rack, and would have given everything in the world to cry ; but I did not even want to. We were on the carpet near the fire. My eyes were fixed on the fire and the shining fire-irons, and remained fixed there like a mummy. Whether it was the glow of the fire, of the irons, or of my feelings, if you like that better, two great enormous tears fell on my breast, and the Consul, with a tenderness I am unable to express, kissed them and drank them.

(Alas ! how am I to tell that ? Yet, it is true.)

I was so touched to the heart with this proof of love that I began to sob with real tears. How can I tell you ? He was wild with happiness and joy. He would have given me the Tuileries at that moment if I had asked him. He laughed and played with me, and made me run after him. To avoid being caught, he climbed on a ladder which was used for fetching books, and as the ladder was very light and on wheels, I pushed it the whole length of the room. He laughed and exclaimed, “ You will hurt yourself. Stop, or I shall be cross.”

(Dear friend, you can turn that to account ; it will be so nice told by you, good Valmore. You will know the date the Emperor set out for the camp at Boulogne.)

That evening the Consul stuffed a great packet of bank-notes in my mouth.

“Heavens ! why do you give me all that ?”

“I don’t want my Georgina to be without money in my absence.”

(His own words !)

There were forty thousand francs.

The Emperor never sent money by any one. He always gave it himself.

He was more tender that evening than I had ever seen him.

I forgot to tell you that that evening he sent away M. de Talleyrand, who had come to work with him. The next day I was at Talleyrand’s, where I often went with the Emperor’s knowledge.

“Ah, come here, my beauty, and let me scold you. I was sent away yesterday on your account.”

“I don’t know what you mean. What ! you were refused admission to my dressing-room at the Feydeau, where I was ? You astonish me greatly.”

“You are too young for a diplomat ; you don’t yet know how to lie, but that will come. As a matter of fact you are right ; I was not in the least offended at being sent away ; I should have done just the same. I hurried back to Paris to my cards. But that is twice I have been dismissed for the same

object. Be proud: that has never happened to me before."

(I can prove to you that this is true. Besides, Talleyrand was always charming; he was so witty.)

I was free for several days; for ever, perhaps. An absence of several days will suffice for the Consul to think no more of me; he will want another plaything. I am of such little consequence. However, he was very tender. This evening will count for something in my life. I felt ungrateful and cold; I don't deserve what he is to me—I a nothing, who at the moment did not understand all the grandeur of the sentiment which made that glory fall before a few tears of a stupid child. I am angry with myself and despise myself. You will understand the value of the man when he sees you no more; you will have deserved his forgetfulness.

During his absence I thought I should breathe more freely and amuse myself by running about everywhere; but not at all. I was more isolated and more bored. I had to play, and that was the best distraction; but, confronted with the crowded house, I saw a desert. That box where the Consul was so often present at our tragic performances, that empty box seemed so sad. My good Talma himself did not act with the same feeling. That evening I seemed to hear the carriage which should take me to Saint-Cloud. Everything is a matter of caprice in life; we do not want what we possess, and we desire that which we have no more. If the

Consul does not want to receive me on his return, I shall go away. Ah, yes; certainly I will not remain in this frightful Paris if I may not see him again. I do not know where I shall go, but I shall set out perfectly happy. . . . Happy! no, I could not be, in spite of my youth and flightiness, if you like. I saw clearly that my envied position was most unstable. From one moment to another the beautiful edifice might crumble. How could I flatter myself into thinking that this too brilliant position would have no end? One has to live too uncertain a life. Let us not think of it. Let us try not to see, and walk on.

I had only Talma, who listened to all my woes with the patience of an angel. I must have bored him.

“You have a magnificent future as an actress, which will always render you independent. Don’t dream of the impossible. Amuse yourself. I only hope that this disappointment, if it comes, will not drive you into becoming a Carmelite, like the beautiful La Vallière. You would be too funny behind the veil, and quite certainly you would not complete the year of your novitiate.”

“Yes, you are right; I should cut a poor figure, and no one would come to snatch the poor actress from that holy asylum. I should certainly be left there. Let me be frankly an actress; without false devotion, which is ridiculous. Let us adore God; I do adore Him and say my little prayer every evening. I pray my own prayers, and I have

never cared to learn written ones. I prefer to learn Racine : that makes more effect."

"Come this evening : you will find David and Gérard and others."

"All right ; count on me, dear friend."

I saw very few people at my own home. I refused nearly every visit from fear. It was an existence nearly always constrained : my position demanded a great reserve of me. So, I did not live, and bored myself horribly. My good Talma was often with me, and always frightfully nervous.

"Take care, dear friend. The women are angry with you : they are spiteful. Don't lose the attachment of the Consul through your own fault. Don't do anything rash, avoid all the horrible 'tittle-tattle.'"

"Yes, dear Talma, I have everything I can desire, except intimate happiness, for, in fact, I am like a machine. I do not belong to myself, and I am waiting till my presence is desired. I am nothing in the great man's existence, and I am, whatever you may say, very isolated. In spite of your friendly advice, I regret my liberty as a young girl, going and coming without conditions, with a will of my own ; receiving who ever wants me and pleases me. What a charming existence ! Nothing can compare with independence. I prefer my humble freedom to a beautiful gilded cage. There is unhappiness for whoever leaves the sphere where God has placed him. I am nothing but a fool.

Self-love urges me on ; then, afterwards, I am left to love a man whom I should only admire. Thus I reason when I am away from the Consul ; with him. I am the happiest woman in the world."

The Consul returned in about days.

(Dear Valmore, if you haven't all the dates, I have begged a friend of mine, Saint-Ange, to procure them for me. He is an old friend of Harel's, who is even going to do me a biography, which will be very nice.)

I saw the Consul the day after his arrival at the Tuileries, in a room which I can still see : the little windows above the state apartments, a drawing- and bed-room with a sort of little boudoir. My dear little windows, how often I look at you. I liked them so much that I often used to take my bath at Vigier's, because from the bathroom I saw my dear little windows. I was foolishly sentimental !

"See, Clémentine, look well at those little windows with their shutters. That one, there, is my room, where I am loved and where I love. I am passionately in love with my good and handsome Consul. I am always trembling lest it may end. I am such an insignificant thing I know quite well, and it is that which causes me despair. Think, I am ridiculous enough to wish to be a great lady !"

To reach the pretty little suite, there was a horrible amount of climbing, and very dark passages to pass.

“Ah, Constant, how high up! I can’t go on any more.”

“Hush! no noise.”

“Why, hush? At Saint-Cloud you used not to say ‘hush!’ You annoy me with your ‘hush.’ Here, there are people everywhere.”

At last we are there. I entered through a small cabinet which led into the bedroom. The Consul had not yet come up, and I rid myself of my cashmere shawl. I was in the habit of putting on two pairs of shoes, because at Saint-Cloud I had to cross the orangery. I was just going to remove the first pair of shoes, when I perceived that I had lost one of them on those frightful stairs.

“Heavens! Constant, I have lost a shoe. Run and look for it. My name is in all my shoes. What will the Consul say? Run quickly.”

While he ran after the wretched shoe the Consul arrived, kind and tender as usual; but I was quite troubled.

“What’s the matter, Georgina? Come, child, tell me.”

“I dare not tell you what has happened, but it is annoying. I have lost my shoe in one of those wretched staircases.”

“That’s a very small misfortune!”

“Yes, but that is not all; my name is written in all my shoes. You see how annoying it is. I tremble to think about it.”

“Well, dear Georgina, your name will be read, and he who finds the pretty white shoe will keep

it, the coxcomb, as having belonged to a beautiful woman. Don't torment yourself, and be quite happy to see me again."

"I am very happy to find you the same to me as you have always been. But please ring for Constant, who has gone after that frightful shoe!"

Constant entered with the shoe.

"Ah, now I am all happiness and joy to see you again." Questions were not lacking. He was a proper child, the Emperor! I told him the truth.

"I was very bored—I am often bored. See, I should like to be always with you. I am very silly, am I not? I know quite well that it is impossible. I know very well, too, that I cannot occupy your thoughts. I am a little distraction, that is all! Still it is sad, but so it must be."

The Consul was too good not to tell me the contrary. It was kindness, nothing else, but that benevolent kindness ought to satisfy me. I retired almost in daylight. The Emperor did not mind, but it was very embarrassing and disagreeable.

Constant, as stupid as a post, made the carriage wait at the small door by the water-side. I told the Emperor that that annoyed me, and henceforth the carriage waited at the bottom of the lawn.

I saw the Emperor nearly always twice a week, and sometimes three times. One day, when my toilette was a little more stylish——

(I forgot to tell you, I believe, that the Emperor used to undress and dress me himself, and placed everything in order just like a good lady's-maid. He

took off my stockings and, as my garters had buckles, he was impatient, and told me to have some round garters made at once to pass over the feet. Since that period, too far away for my charms, I have worn nothing else. These details are insignificant for the memoirs, but I want to tell you everything.)

I had a pretty wreath of white roses. The Emperor, who that evening was charmingly gay, decked himself with my wreath, and, looking at himself in the glass, said to me—

“Ha, Georgina, how pretty I am with the wreath; I look like a fly in some milk” (*those were his childish words*). Then he began to sing, and forced me to sing with him the duet from *la Fausse Magie*—

“Vous souvient-il de cette fête ou l’où voulut nous voir danser ?”

There, that is how the Emperor behaved with me. As I was always questioning Constant to know if the Consul was always the same to me, he replied—

“Heavens! I don’t know if the Consul is very faithful, but I know this quite well that, the day he gives me the order to come and fetch you, he is very light-hearted, and I seem to lift him from the ground as I help him with his breeches. Besides, would you like me to tell you something? I believe the respect and reverence of great ladies fatigue him and make him yawn; while, with you, he is always gay and jolly, and leaves the receptions in very good time to rejoin you.”

(All that is true !)

But how stupid Constant is to tell me all that ! He gives me joy and, by his stupid words, leaves uneasiness in my heart. There are others, but he prefers me. Why ? Because I am of no consequence, and he is a child with a child. I amuse him ; that is a good deal, but not enough, and that can't last. Ah ! always my fixed idea. When all is over I shall go away. Instead of saying to myself, " How childish, my dear, you will find something else ! "—and yet it *was* very childish !

I arrived. Constant said to me—

" The Consul has gone up and is waiting for you."

I entered. No one was there, and I looked in all the rooms. I called out. Nothing ! Nobody ! Then I rang.

" Constant, has the Consul gone down again ? "

" No, madame, search well."

He winked at me and showed me the door of the boudoir, which I had never thought of entering. The Consul was there, hidden beneath cushions and laughing like a school-boy. He had asked for my portrait, and I had brought it him. It was a miniature, which he did not consider very good, and he was right.

" Well, return it to me, and I will have another done."

" No, I will keep it ; you can always have another done all the same."

" Yes, but on one condition.

“Ah! there are conditions, Mademoiselle Georgina! Let us hear the conditions.”

“Listen, then. It is not very amusing to pose, and especially for me, who have no patience, so I make a great sacrifice for you. Well, I want your portrait in exchange. Do you see, I want it. No, I *desire* it, that is better.”

“If you are nice and good I will give it you.”

But he did not propose giving me a gold coin with his effigy, as has been suggested. I had, and still have, his portrait, an adorable miniature, properly given by him to me.

“As I haven’t yet got your portrait, to-day I want even something else. Don’t refuse me, because to-day I am in a very bad temper, and I shall be cross.”

He laughed till he cried.

“I refuse; I want to see you in a great rage. There now, I refuse.”

“We shall see. Ring for Constant.”

“Ring yourself. I allow you.”

“Constant, some scissors.”

“Go and bring madame the scissors. Ah! what do you wish to do with the scissors? What do you want to cut off? Really, you are frightening me.”

How the dear Consul laughed!

“I want to cut off a lock of your beautiful hair, so soft and fine.”

“No, no, my dear; I have too little of it.”

But I ran after him, holding my scissors.

“I only want four hairs ; I promise you not to cut any more. If you have no confidence in me, I shall go away.”

“Ah ! the obstinate little wretch. Come, then, cut them ; but don’t let it be seen.”

I cut four or five hairs.

“See if I have kept my word. I have really too few.”

“Well, rascal, cut again, but only a few.”

“Yes, rest assured.”

And I cut off a nice little lock.

“Oh, the lying little wretch ! It is enormous.”

“No, look carefully ; pardon me, it won’t be seen at all. I still want something else.”

“Ah ! will you soon be finished ? ”

“At once. Well, I want you when you come into your little box—you know the little box where I like to see you so much—to show me my portrait. I don’t know how you will do it, but you will make me very happy.”

(Dear friend, there is no one else in the world who can turn all these details to account, which will become charming in your hands.)

You see the Emperor’s character, and how he quite lent himself to the caprices of a mere chit. Great men have their weak side, it is sweet for them sometimes to descend and become small, to know the simple and intimate side of life in its details, and doubtless they are happy to forget themselves sometimes.

Next day he came to listen to *les Horaces*, and

at a moment when I was standing at the side of the stage near his box he raised his pretty little hand and made me a sign. Had he the portrait? I do not know. The intention was sufficiently amiable, and I had to be content with that.

In spite of the rumours which were current concerning my intimacy with the Consul, adorers (I can't find another word, and that is a bad one) did not fail to present themselves. Decidedly I did not want to live altogether like a recluse. I received in my dressing-room, after my performances, Frenchmen and foreigners of high distinction. And why not receive them now and again at home?

One day the secretary of the Prince of Würtemberg (*historical*) was announced. I received the gentleman, who brought me, on behalf of the prince, a magnificent diamond ring, which he begged me to accept as a proof of the pleasure he had experienced at the performances of *les Horaces*. It was simple homage, which he hoped I would accept; and further, an enormous red velvet purse embroidered in gold, one of those purses of the shape which are used as offertory-bags. This purse, of colossal dimensions, was filled with louis.

"Sir, tell the prince that I accept with pleasure and pride the ring he condescends to offer me. As for the purse, I refuse it. He can make a better use of the money, which will relieve many unfortunates. But French artistes are not in the habit of receiving offerings of money."

The gentleman was very confused.

“Mademoiselle, the prince will make his own excuses if you will receive him. He did not at all wish to wound you in offering you this purse, and he would have begged you—I have not the least doubt about it—to distribute the money yourself.”

“Thank the prince, sir, and be good enough to tell him that I perform my very modest charities with my own small purse. Yes, M. le prince can come, and I shall have great pleasure in receiving him and thanking him.”

(This happened to me.)

The prince came the next day, and, judge of my surprise, it was the *soi-disant* secretary!

“Heavens! prince, tell me why you disguised yourself.”

“Pardon, mademoiselle, but I dared not . . .”

“Ah! yes, because of that beautiful purse. You don’t know me, prince; but gold is a bad passport to reach me with. I don’t like money.”

The prince was tall, very slender, and shy, which gave him a very awkward appearance. He was the father, I think (*you ought to know, Valmore*), of the Empress of Russia, wife of Paul I.

The dear prince used to see me in my dressing-room, where he found good and distinguished company. Those reunions were charming. After the performance of the tragedy, Talma, who received the same visits, always came down to my dressing-room, accompanied by his cortège of artistes and notabilities. It often happened that

Mongila, the call-boy at the theatre, came to tell us that the performance was ended. Impossible!

On next seeing the First Consul, he said—

“Well, Georgina, did you receive the Prince of Würtemberg?”

“Yes, and I will tell you what has happened to me.”

“In a week many things can happen.”

“I see you so seldom, so listen. I get bored myself. I received the prince, and I shall receive many others. Besides, you know, all the visits we receive in our dressing-rooms are public, so where’s the harm.”

“You have a disposition for grandeur, dear Georgina.”

“You have given me the taste for them; I adapt myself to a very good school. As long as I have the good fortune to inspire you with a little interest, I shall do nothing which may cause your favour to cool.”

“But afterwards?”

“I don’t know what may happen.”

“You are very foolish.”

“Well, that is what I was going to tell you about: here is the ring to begin with.”

I told him the story of the purse.

“Fie!” said the Consul. “What bad taste! You received that ring a little lightly. I expect you not to receive presents again in so-called homage of your talent; that is not proper.”

“However, there are actresses who have received

presents abroad ; one sees it every day. It is not their fault if the French only show their admiration by beautiful phrases ; it is much cheaper."

"Georgina, you do not please me this evening. I don't like that talk. I think I shall do well to marry you off."

(I do not remember if I told you of the proposition he made me, and perhaps I am repeating it again. What does it matter?)

"I to be married ! I ! And to whom, then ? Heavens !"

"Be calm ; I will give you to a general. You will leave the stage, of course, and live honourably."

"Is the proposition you are making serious ?"

"Very serious."

I was wounded to the bottom of my heart. Ah ! Constant, you were stupid enough to tell me the truth ! Ha ! ha ! Some great lady has passed his way ! My mind was soon made up.

"I beg a thousand pardons for disobeying you, but I won't and can't get married. When you had the caprice to send for me . . ."

"Caprice !" he exclaimed.

"Yes, my God, caprice ! . . . I was an artiste, and will remain an artiste. I to take a conventional husband ! Ah ! if one can be found complaisant enough to play the part, you may be sure I could neither love nor esteem such a man !"

"You are right, Georgina ; you are a fine girl !"

I spoke thus to the Emperor frankly and

artlessly many times. As I wished to keep up a worldly talk, which one learns like a part, the Emperor stopped me, laughing, and saying—

“Leave these silly phrases and speak to me as you feel; don’t try your wit on me. Tell me everything that comes to you naturally.”

He never scolded me for my whims and stupidities, you understand. That is why, I believe, in spite of his absences, I always found him, even to the last moment, kind and excellent to me; so it has become a cult, an adoration which nothing has been able to change, and in which I glory. All these recollections have consoled me for many disappointments and miseries, and many betrayals. Poor Emperor! How the illustrious martyr had to suffer! One has no right to complain.

(Dear friend, put in those lines on my Emperor; I particularly want to put them in.)

The Emperor was not eight days without seeing me again. I found him gay and still kind. A singular adventure happened to me, which I will relate.

A Captain Hill was announced—English or American? “Let the gentleman tell you what he wants, Clémentine. You know that I no longer receive people who have not been introduced to me and whom I don’t know. Well, come then—what does he want?”

“He says he can only say to you what he has been charged with.”

“Well, let him write to me.”

"The gentleman pretends that he is unable to write it; he can only speak, and not write."

"Well, tell him to be off, and that I can't receive him; and don't you return, it annoys me."

In spite of my order, Clémentine, who never allowed herself to be intimidated, returned.

"What! there again, insolent girl! Leave me."

"But, mademoiselle, the gentleman is very amusing, and your curiosity will be piqued when you know him. What he has to say is a secret he can only confide to you."

"A secret!—that is peculiar. Well, I will receive him to-morrow at two o'clock. Who is the man? Has he come to ask help? Is he a poor beggar?"

"Oh, not at all! He is a very handsome man, quite well groomed and very elegant."

"Well, perhaps he is a thief. Your handsome man frightens me, Clémentine. You will remain in the boudoir, and the valet will remain as sentinel at the door of my room. You will be the cause of whatever misfortune may happen, idiot that you are, to come and excite my curiosity! Your handsome man has not yet been received."

At two o'clock next day Captain Hill was announced.

"Come, the die is cast! Let him come in, and you stop there."

He was certainly quite a nice man, with excellent manners.

"What do you want of me, monsieur?"

“Madame, I am charged with a very delicate mission, which embarrasses me strangely. Madame, pardon me at once the proposition which I am going to make to you. I have to speak seriously to you, but my words can only be heard in the open air.”

“What, sir, in the open air? Really this strange proposal cannot be accepted, nor do I accept it. Excuse me, sir, if I leave you, but I can listen to you no longer.”

“But, madame, do not distrust me, please.”

“Ah, that’s it, monsieur; do you want to elope with me, then?”

“Madame, not the least in the world. Let your carriage follow me with your people in it to the bois de Boulogne. Be so good as to accept a place in my carriage, and once in the open air you shall know all and learn the object of my mission, which perhaps will not be without interest for you.”

“Perhaps all this may be true; but I refuse.”

I was terribly frightened,

“Reflect, madame. What I have to offer does not present itself twice in a lifetime. Reflect, and perhaps you will be more confident.”

I turned my head aside.

“Well, Clémentine, what do you say about it? Isn’t it terrifying?”

“My word, no, mademoiselle! The man is all right. What harm do you suppose he could do you? If I were in your place I should go.”

“Well, you go with him. You will gain some-

thing by it, doubtless. As for me, I shall not go. Who is the man?"

But suppositions kept on recurring. My imagination ran on at the same time. He returned next day—I refused—and the day after. That man fatigues me. I want to know who he is.

"Tell him to come to-morrow at two. I will go!"

The next day saw me in a carriage beside this mysterious personage, handsome and young, who really would have done better to speak for himself. I was very careless to expose myself thus. Every instant I looked out of the door to assure myself that I was being followed by my own carriage and servants.

At last we reached the bois de Boulogne.

"At last, sir, we are in the open air, I hope. Explain yourself quickly, for I confess to you I am in a hurry to leave you."

He gave me in the interview some half-confidences: that I had inspired a violent passion in a high and mighty English lord; that he had had my portrait done (some daub, doubtless); that he was madly in love, and wished at any cost to make me leave France.

I began to laugh.

"Don't laugh, madame, it is quite serious." (Yes, if I wish it, I suppose.)

He gave me details about the house I should occupy, and the brilliant existence I should lead; but they were always mysterious details.

“Yes, monsieur, all that is truly magnificent. But of whom are you speaking? Supposing that, for the first time in my life, riches tempt me to the point of leaving everything, and exiling myself in a country I do not love at all, and which I never shall love, at least I wish to know the name of the brilliant and luxurious lover. You will admit, monsieur, that all this too much resembles a tale from *The Thousand and One Nights*; that it is as strange as you, a young and handsome knight, who charge yourself with such an embassy. It is not at all understandable.”

He was unwilling to tell me more about it.

“Then,” I said, “good-day, sir. I am going back to my carriage.”

I did so, laughing heartily at the comical adventure. He is an original, who wished to amuse himself—that is all. I thought no more about it, nor even mentioned it again.

But the man was always before me, seated in the promenades or the theatres.

“Ah! my dear sir, your perseverance in following me is beginning to fatigue me strangely. I am very much tempted to tell the Consul of your inconceivable obstinacy.”

But what’s the good? He is an original; better leave him alone.

He did not consider himself beaten, and returned again and again. I would not receive him. He waited for me at the foot of the staircase, and at the moment I was getting into the carriage,

implored me to listen to him for an instant. I had to be polite ; I could not mortify the man before my servant.

“ Madame, in mercy give me a second interview in the Bois ! ”

“ My dear sir, this time you can go for your drive quite alone. This joke is lasting too long, and is annoying me to the last degree. Be so good as not to insist. You will make me cross. For goodness’ sake write that to whoever sends you, and give me peace. A thousand compliments, and, above all, good-bye.”

“ You order me to retire, madame. I obey ; but before leaving you I ought not to leave you ignorant that having received an authorisation to tell you everything, I might perhaps hope that you would accord me a second interview.”

“ Ah ! you have received authorisation to let me know your mysterious mission ? ”

A frightful curiosity was urging me. This was coming to me from a country which inspired me with little confidence. I decided at once ; I had no more fear for myself, I wished to know everything.

“ Come, then, monsieur, but at once. Your carriage is there. I will get into it, and mine shall follow.”

The man never said a word to me so long as we were in Paris ; but in the midst of the trees he resumed his speech. He began by throwing down diamond ornaments, really magnificent

diamonds, you know—necklaces, bracelets, earrings, all kept together by little Venetian chains. The earrings especially were regal: huge stones hung from large drops. It was dazzling.

“Ah! monsieur, all that is very beautiful. And then?”

“Madame, all this is yours. You are begged to accept them. Here, besides, is the portrait of the prince.”

“The gentleman is very handsome, and the diamonds which surround his portrait are not less beautiful. He is superb! But I have not the honour of knowing the face. His name, if you please?”

“Madame, it is the Prince of Wales!”

“Ah! sir, so it is the Prince of Wales. Ah, indeed! Take back all those objects. I am leaving you, monsieur, and I wish you good-bye.”

I got back into my own carriage.

“You refuse, then, madame?”

“I refuse, sir, with joy.”

I had to see the Consul that evening, and hastened to tell him everything.

“I was terrified, I swear to you, by the name of the personage. I tell you so, and don’t accuse me of mere curiosity. No, I saw there were graver matters.”

“Dear Georgina, perhaps they wanted to bring to life a second Judith.”

“You will never be a Holofernes.”

“Reassure yourself; I knew all. You will never see him again.”

As a matter of fact I heard no more mention of him. I never met that man again.

(Dear, all this adventure is true, very piquant and quite true. The whole history of Captain Hill is true.)

My theatrical life kept me from boredom. I was playing continually.

(Verteuil is going to send me the names of the new tragedies that appeared at this time. No doubt you remember them yourself, dear Valmore.)

All those works had little success. There was one in 1806, I think, which caused all Paris to flock to it: *les Templiers*, by Raynouard. I shall never forget the first performance, which had gloomy results for my heart.

Being unable to procure a box, either for gold or silver, I placed my little mother behind the scenes. She felt ill, and there was an anxious crowd round her, and her cashmere shawl was stolen. That was a little matter; but, alas! from that day my mother was constantly ill. Poor mother, she was touched by death!

Lafont's and my parts were capital, especially Lafont's. Mine was sown with some good lines, which produced an excellent effect. Talma in Marigny was admirable and as touching as possible. Saint-Prix as the *grand maître* was good. The brilliant Dalmas caused much applause in his speech as the Constable. *(He recited splendidly, if you*

remember, *Valmore*.) Each performance filled the house to the roof; it was a long and fruitful success. Our house was so badly constructed that I believe it could scarcely reach the figure of four thousand francs.

My part could scarcely excite jealousy, but of course the poor Duchesnois was furious.

“They gave you the part on account of your physique.”

“Do you think so, my dear? You are wrong. I consider your part very original.”

(I will write to Fonta of the Comédie-Française to ask him the number of tragical works which were played from my début to the day of my departure for Russia, and since my return in 1813 to the day when an order from M. de Duras reinstated me. I think all that will be very useful.)

I had been nearly a fortnight without seeing the Consul again. I let nothing be said to him. I waited, but this time without impatience, and nearly resolved to refuse my visit if it were asked of me; which was not long in happening.

Constant came to ask me in the name of the Consul to repair that evening to the Tuileries.

“Impossible, my dear fellow! For a fortnight I have been quite ready; to-day I am indisposed, and would not go out for anything in the world.”

Constant insisted.

“The Consul will be cross.”

“I am very sorry; but I do not wish to go out.”

Was I a slave, then? No, certainly not; I too had my caprices.

The day afterwards I was at the Français, in my little proscenium box looking out on to the theatre, right opposite the Consul's, who that day was also there. *Les Femmes Savantes* was being played, and some other little piece I do not remember. I did not look once at the box. I would be very much on my guard; I was too hurt for that.

There was a knock at the door of the box, and I saw the handsome, and kind Murat.

"What procures me the honour of your visit?"

"Nothing in particular, my dear Georgina; the pleasure of a moment's talk with you, that's all. How comfortable you look in this little box, it is delightful and so cosy. Besides, you are opposite the Consul."

"I have always had this box; I do not care to show myself. Here I can scarcely be seen, and I can see everybody; besides, one can talk at one's ease."

"Cast your eyes on the Consul's box; he looks at you a lot, pretending to listen to *les Femmes Savantes*."

"Ah! I am very flattered, I assure you; but as a matter of fact it doesn't interest me at all."

"Has there been a quarrel, then?"

"Ah! you are making fun! One has not the right to quarrel with the Consul, but one has to remain one's own; that is what I am doing."

“Come, wrong-headed one; you refused yesterday, did you not? You will consent to-morrow.”

“No more than yesterday. There, be kind, and don’t talk to me any more about it. You see how red I am; well, that is because I am angry. How hot it is here; I am suffocating!”

“Will you, dear Georgina, come and take a little drive?”

“Very gladly; I should be charmed to go out.”

“Give me a place in your carriage, Georgina. Where is it waiting?”

“Over there, in the rue Montpensier.”

“I will go there.”

At last we are seated. Prince Murat was excellent, and certainly he was not used to doing the amiable.

“Let us go to the bois de Boulogne.”

“Let us go.”

I was enchanted to have left my box before the Consul’s departure. A little self-love satisfied, and a heart wounded. Ah, poor women!

“See, general, what do you expect from me? You know quite well that is all over. The Consul has remained a fortnight without seeing me.”

“Eh, well, what does that prove? Do you think then, my dear, that he is a man like any other? How silly you are!”

“Did you say silly? Say stupid instead! You say that he is not a man like other men. You are right; he is a fine great man, exalted above all. But to a woman he is a man like any other.”

“You are worth all of them. In spite of your charming anger, it doesn’t do to be obstinate. You must go there to-morrow: he desires it. I tell you for your good. You would be wrong to be obdurate; be glad that he desires to see you. Ah, my dear, other women would behave with more alacrity! If you follow your head it will very soon make you commit plenty of follies, and much later you will repent of them.”

“You speak like a sage. That is splendid; you really edify me and make me laugh—you, the handsome and brilliant Murat! Thanks a thousand times for your grave counsels! I will learn to profit by them, if I can. But then I should become a dissembler. Am I understood? I shall see the Consul again, but with a mask. If I do not disguise myself I am quite disgraced.”

“Very well, put on your mask, but let it be of a more tender colour.”

“Changeable, you would say? There, general, you are all monsters!”

The next day I was at the Tuileries, but without any joy. I do not know why, but it seemed to me that a misfortune was waiting for me. The Consul was the same, still kind and loving; but I had a countenance which was not in keeping; I did not smile, and was cold and serious. The Consul began to laugh.

“Ah! see what a face you are making! Leave it off quickly, it doesn’t suit you at all; do not spoil my Georgina. That sulkiness is without

charm. Return to your nature quickly. Be as you were yesterday in your box: a spoilt child, and badly brought up, who does not like to be thwarted."

"And you, sir, do not be so long away from me; it is that which displeases and annoys me horribly."

"One cannot do all one wishes, my dear Georgina; but, whatever happens, be assured that I shall always have a tender attachment for you, and that I shall not lose sight of you."

"But what you tell me is very sad. Shall I then see you no more?"

"Yes, my dear, always; I promise you. Don't be afraid. There, that is enough; no more questions to-day. Be good-natured and natural, and count on me.

(All this, my friends, passed as I have written, a little time before his Coronation. I am not in good trim; all my poor spirit is tortured for money, you understand.)

I returned home sadly, in spite of all the Consul's tenderness; I felt that some misfortune was going to happen to me. Then it was that I repeated—

"I will leave."

I saw the Consul again a few days afterwards; on entering he took my hands with unheard-of kindness, and made me sit down.

"My dear Georgina, I have to tell you something which will grieve you; I shall not be able to see you for some time to come. Well, have you nothing to say?"

“No ; I was expecting it. I should have been mad to believe that I, who am nothing in the world, could have occupied a place, I do not say in your heart, but in your thoughts. I have been a simple distraction, that is all.”

“You are a child, and it is charming of you to say that to me ; you prove your attachment, and I love to know you love me. We are loved so little ! But I will see you again, I promise you.”

“Thank you for your benevolent words, but I shall not profit by your kindness ; I shall go away.”

“I don’t believe that. You will never make that mistake ; you would lose your future.”

“My future ; I have none. Besides, it matters very little to me ; I shall go away.”

The Consul was kinder than he had ever been ; I was profoundly touched by all the sweet consoling words he condescended to use. He was so good, and kept me very late.

“Come, my good Georgina, good-bye for the present.”

“Oh, not good-bye for the present, but adieu for ever.”

It seemed as if the world around me had vanished. It seemed to me that everything was dead, that nothing would live again. Ah ! it is when we part that we feel all the happiness we are losing. I was another woman, quite broken by sorrow.

“Well, Clémentine, you will wait up no more

for me at night. It seems that I shall never see the Consul again."

"Is it possible?"

"It is possible. For a time, he said."

"You must believe him, mademoiselle. A man like him does not stand on ceremony, and if it was quite broken off he would have told you."

We spent the rest of the night in making a thousand conjectures.

(It was nearly six o'clock when I got back from the Tuileries.)

At ten o'clock I sent for Talma, and he arrived quite out of breath.

"Great Heavens! What has happened, my dear friend, to make you send for me so early?"

"What has happened is that I shall never see the Consul again."

"How is that, then? It is not possible!"

"Oh, for that matter, everything is possible, my good friend. When one is thrown into too elevated a position, the future does not exist. However, the Consul was angelically tender and kind. He said to me, 'My dear Georgina, for a time I shall see you no more. A great event is going to happen which will take up every moment. But I will see you again, I promise you.'"

(Those are his very words, dear Madame Valmore.)

"Well, my dear, we must believe it. But the great event! Ah! I have it! Don't you know? There is talk of crowning the Consul, who will be declared Emperor. It is even said that the Pope

will come to consecrate him at Nôtre Dame. Those are the rumours which are going about, but there is nothing official at the bottom of them."

"Well, dear friend, when that will be, my seeing the Consul will not prevent the Pope from coming, or stop the coronation."

"No ; but he himself even needs to stop any gossip."

"Say, my friend, that his fancy is over ; or does he want to perform his devotions with humility, without being disturbed by feelings ? As you like. See, what has happened was to happen—I have told you so a hundred times. I have nothing to complain about. I only am to blame, thank God : I am the one to suffer, and it is quite right. Yes, dear friend, I suffer. My heart is not capital invested at heavy interest. I have given loyally without calculation. I have never thought for a moment of making a fortune, and he knows it. I have never desired anything. I was thoroughly happy in seeing him. You can well believe, dear friend, that I must suffer a great deal."

"Come, come, you are over-excited. You go on and on without rhyme or reason. Could you imagine that a man such as he would transform himself into the lover of Florian's *Fables* ? When one has the good fortune to attract the attention of such an immense man, you have, my dear, to become great in your turn, and leave off all childish ideas of romantic affection."

“You are right. I will say no more about it, and will not complain about a misfortune which must yield to greatness. I will become the Georgina of former times, and resume my gaiety and cherished indifference. Let us lunch together, Talma. Then, if you will be so kind, we will go and take a walk in the country.”

“But it is perishingly cold, my dear.”

“Bah! the cold does good; it calms one. Ice is good when one has the fever. There, you will go and tell them at home that you are dining with me. Besides, I won’t let you go; I intend to spend the whole day with you. This evening we will go and hear our dear ingenuous Brunet; although you are such a great tragedian he knows how to make you laugh—yes, and uproariously.”

“How you dispose of me! I had business to do and calls to make.”

“Bah! you will do all that to-morrow. To-morrow I shall have made up my mind what to do, and will restore to you your liberty. Is it agreed?”

“Well, well, do as you like with me, you crazy creature. I am your slave till to-night.”

The rumour of the Coronation gained credit from day to day, and at last became official. A month afterwards it took place.

(December?—the date?—the day?—the year?)

I was overwhelmingly sad. Why? I ought to have rejoiced to see the great Napoleon elevated to the rank which belonged to him and which he had

won. But selfishness is ever present. It seemed to me that, once upon the throne, the Emperor would never see his poor Georgina again. I did not care to see the ceremony. I had places for Nôtre Dame, but nothing would have induced me to go there. Besides, I have never had the least curiosity for public festivals. Still, my family wished to see, so I hired some windows in a house opposite the Pont Neuf, and got them for three hundred francs. But we had to go on foot. I had some difficulty in making up my mind to go—from the rue Saint-Honoré it is a good step, and in the month of December too! We dressed by candle-light, and when we set out it was scarcely day. The streets were crowded and sanded; it was only possible to walk slowly, there were so many people. In about two hours we were in possession of our *dear windows*. My footman had ordered a good fire beforehand, and breakfast. We were sheltered from cold and hunger—money is good sometimes! We had four windows, two looking on to the square, and two on to the quay. The drawing-room was pleasant; some good easy-chairs and arm-chairs—if they were good they were hard. The furniture of that period was atrocious. At the least movement there was a rush to the windows.

“Come, sister, and look at the procession.”

“All right; I shall have plenty of time. You open the windows every second; I am freezing, so leave me at the fire. Perhaps I shall have to

play to-morrow, and I am not anxious to catch cold."

Besides, I was bored to death.

"I am going to sleep. Wake me up when you see the cavalry."

"Ah! ah! the procession!"

This time it really was he.

(If Valmore would undertake the description of this magnificent procession, it would be done with a master hand. As for me, I don't understand anything about it, and the description is very essential; it will make a diversion from the little insignificant details. The glass coaches, all the family, the Emperor's sisters, and that beautiful and gentle Hortense—I do not remember if she was there, Valmore, but she ought to have been. The carriage of Pope Pius VII, the cross-bearer, mounted on his mule, which the naughty little urchins teased, the coins which were thrown among the crowd—all these details, Valmore, are for you.)

At last came the Emperor's carriage, richly gilded. All the pages, some on the steps, some behind, and everywhere, were admirable to behold. We were on the first floor, and nothing escaped us, our glances penetrated into the carriages. The Emperor was calm and smiling; but the Empress Joséphine was marvellous—she always had a perfect taste in dress; but she was ever noble, and always had a benevolent glance which attracted you to her. She was, even in her dress of State, most simple and charming. She wore her diadem

without apparently feeling its weight. She saluted her people with so much kindness and encouragement that every one's sympathy went out to her. Still, she was imposing, but her smile attracted you to her, and you could meet her glance without fear, persuaded that she would not repel you. Ah! really, the adorable woman was thoroughly kind-hearted. Grandeurs had not changed her. She was a woman of ability and heart. What a misfortune for France and the Emperor that he divorced her!

The procession over, I returned home with a sad heart, saying to myself, "All is over." I heard no mention of the Emperor, and did not try to see him. I was in the habit of writing him a small note when I did not see him, but I found that I was to stand aside. I did so. Fêtes, illuminations and fireworks were not wanting, but certainly I had no desire to run and see the spectacle. Mars came with Armand, Thénard, Bourgoin, and forced me to go with them to the Tuileries. It would have been ungracious on my part not to yield to them, for my sister burned with desire to rush there, and as Mars's daughter was my sister's little friend, I had to resign myself. So we found ourselves at the Tuileries in the midst of a crowd which was suffocating. The Emperor, Empress and all the Court were on the balcony and came forward to salute that enthusiastic crowd. There was a really dangerous moment.

Women cried, "I am suffocating!" and my two little ones cried louder than any one.

"Oh, my daughter!" cried Mars, terrified.

"Oh, my sister! Save my sister, Armand!"

"My friends, let us get away from here; it is impossible for us to remain, we shall be crushed underfoot."

And we hoisted the two children on poor Armand's shoulders.

Then we saw Lafont, Talma and Fleury, coming towards us—luckily, too, by Jove! They made a passage for us, and, thanks to them, we gained the street.

"What a jolly evening! We are nearly undressed, and quite torn to pieces. My cashmere shawl is a nice sight, if you like! It is in shreds. I shall keep it as a remembrance of the amusement we have given ourselves."

Bourgoin was furious.

"Look, my girl, my beautiful lace veil has had the same fate as your shawl."

"Heaven bless you, Armand! You are the cause of it all. Why did you come for me?"

We ended by laughing at our disordered clothes. The good Thénard said to us—

"The evening mustn't end thus. All of you come home. We will dance and sup; then, children, every one to his own home."

"So be it," says Fleury, "let us go and dance."

I was gayer and in higher spirits than any of them

—it was worth while. We danced and waltzed like mad things. I had taken Lafont as a partner.

“Ah, my dear, not so quickly. Heavens, my head is swimming! Do stop!”

“Well, friend, let us turn more quickly.”

“I tell you, good woman, I am exhausted. I shall fall.”

And he actually did fall on purpose.

“Now, my dear, you will leave me in peace.”

He was laughed at, and a penance was imposed.

“Very good, friends, I am suited splendidly in my little corner where you have placed me. Only give me something to drink.”

“Thénard, a large glass of water. Lafont is thirsty.”

“Don’t trouble, you people, I will help myself. I know where the fountain is.”

He passed into the dining-room, and helped himself to some very good wine.

“Look at the Gascon! What fools he is making of you all! Let us hurry to the supper-table or he will revenge himself by eating up everything.

(All these details are very childish; but, as they are true, you will do what you like with them.)

We retired at six in the morning. Bourgoïn kept on falling asleep in every corner.

“Ah! my girl, I am done up; I shall never have the courage to return home.”

“I will drive you back; be easy.”

"And me too, George," said Mars, "I must be taken back as well."

"And so must we all."

"But where can I put you all? It is impossible."

"We'll get on the dicky behind, with the man."

"And I'll keep dear Mezerai here for the night. She shall have a bed on the sofa."

"Come, then, and arrange yourselves as best you can."

Mars, Bourgoïn and I, with the two children with us, go inside the carriage, and the rest as best they can—Armand and Talma on the box, Fleury and Lafont behind!

"Bourgoïn, my girl, drive Talma to the rue de Seine. And a nice drive we have; the poor horses have got their load."

Armand, Mars, rue de Richelieu; the handsome Lafont, rue de Villedo; Fleury, rue Traversière.

"Good morning, dear comrades. We shall all be very fresh to-day; still we have amused ourselves although we have tired ourselves. Courage, you people of the Comédie; I don't despair of the public hissing you to-night. You will sleep standing."

(Your gay and youthful mind will find some drolleries in this shockingly stupid account. What can you expect, dear? It is stupid as I tell it, but it will become witty and amusing under your pen.)

Ten days after the Coronation the Emperor commanded Cinna. His appearance with the Empress caused an outburst of enthusiasm beyond

description. All the ladies stood up and waved their handkerchiefs. The cries of "Long live the Emperor! Long live the Empress!" were enough to split one's head. It was a proper and beautiful homage of well-deserved enthusiasm.

Strangely enough, I remained cold and unfeeling, like a marble statue; an impassable barrier was raised in my eyes between an Emperor and me. The pleasing past was to be effaced from my memory; but could it be from my heart? I had to try, and the struggle was very painful. Let me be simply an artiste, and forget.

I went on to the stage with a wish to be only *Émilie*, and nothing more. I did not turn my eyes once to that box which recently caused me so much joy. I played my part, encouraged by Talma, who kept on repeating—

"Don't give way, whatever you do. Look at this house, crowded with notabilities of all sorts. Dear friend, think of your future, and don't give your critics any hold. Pride alone, on account of the Emperor's presence, ought to make you surpass yourself."

Dear friend! It was quite right what he told me; my somewhat vivid imagination was kindled, and I really forgot everything, and tried to place myself to the level of my impersonation. My Talma was happy at my success. In my scenes with him he kept saying to me in a low voice—

"That's it! You are doing capitally; go on. Speak out, but don't force your voice."

Still I had cause to be disconcerted ; the Emperor applauded me very much, and the good and benevolent Joséphine approved by inclinations of her gracious head the applause which had been given me. In the fifth act, at the famous line—

“ Si j’ai séduit Cinna, j’en séduirai bien d’autres,”—

which I said in a very low voice ; I felt how improper the application would be. The public—the fine and appreciative Parisian public—felt it too. There was a great silence ; I breathed freely and raised my head.

The Emperor and Empress sent to compliment us. That evening, for instance, our dressing-rooms were filled with all the Ambassadors and several Ministers, as was the custom. These gentlemen liked to come among the actresses, and, without disguising their rank, would proudly cross the corridor which led to our dressing-rooms quite publicly. They liked to be present at the little disorder which was quite natural after a performance ; to see us in our wraps, despoiled of our tinsel. The dresser would say to them—

“ Pardon, gentlemen, let me get to madame ; I must take down her hair.”

“ Allow me, gentlemen, to rid myself of these ornaments, which tire my head.”

“ Certainly. We don’t wish to disturb you.”

And Talleyrand would say purposely from his corner at the fire-place—

“ You don’t disturb her. Our beautiful Georgina

is a woman and a flirt; she wants to be seen in all her simplicity. Look how this pink muslin *négligé* suits her and affords a glimpse of her arms. You agree, gentlemen, this costume is just as good as Émilie's?"

"Monseigneur, I beg you to hold your tongue. You are always sarcastic with your railing compliments. Ah! you are a wretch, and you will see I won't let you come into my dressing-room any more!"

"You would be very sorry for it. My compliments don't wound you as much as you pretend. Am I not right, Talma, that she is a flirt?"

That elegant circle, those great men, the poets and painters, who held their places worthily and to whom homage was rendered, flattered one's vanity however much one may have wished not to let it influence one. Such pleasures alleviate boredom.

In the midst of all this I had heard no mention of the Emperor since the ceremony. I made a thousand plans. I was beginning to isolate myself less, and received more people, though I was not seeking for pleasures, but distractions and excitements which should prevent me from thinking. That was all I could hope.

At length, after more than five weeks, Constant came.

"What chance brings you here after such a long absence? What do you want?"

"The Emperor begs you to come this evening."

“Ah ! he remembers me ? Tell the Emperor that I will obey his orders. What time ?”

“Eight o’clock.”

“I shall be ready.”

This time I was impatient, and could hardly keep still. My poor little slighted heart !

I made a dazzling toilette. The Emperor received me with his usual kindness.

“How beautiful you are, Georgina ! What finery !”

“Could one be too fine, sire, when one has the honour to be received by your Majesty ?”

“Ah ! my dear, what a demeanour and what courtly language ! Come, Georgina, high-flown manners don’t suit you at all. Be what you were : a good-hearted, frank and simple creature.”

“Sire, one changes in five weeks ; you have given me time to reflect and to forget my former habits. No, I am no longer the same ; I feel it. I shall always be honoured when your Majesty deigns to receive me, but that is all. I am discouraged, and I must have a change of air.”

How shall I tell you ? He was very indulgent, in fact he was perfect, taking the trouble to disabuse me of my fears. I accepted his kind words, but I did not trust them. I returned with very bad thoughts, almost paralysed. Ought I to believe him ? Ought I to doubt him ? Yes, I found him just the same as in the past ; but I do not know why the Emperor has driven away my First Consul. Everything is much grander and more

imposing ; happiness ought not to be there. Let us look for happiness elsewhere if it exists at all.

I saw the Emperor less frequently. A beautiful woman (married, however) attached to the Empress began to be talked about ; still lower it was whispered that the Emperor was paying her attention. Dear Joséphine ! the simple actress was to be preferred ; she remained in the background and caused no offence !

(You will see, dear, if you wish to put that in. It was Madame Duchâtel.)

Not being at ease anywhere, I decided to leave my apartments in the rue Saint-Honoré. I had really taken a violent dislike to them.

(Dear, good friend, I have such a poor head for what I am doing that I really have forgotten if I told you the little anecdote of Demidoff—I was still in the rue Saint-Honoré.)

Demidoff was pretentious enough, because of his immense fortune, to call himself a count (he was not one at all). He had iron mines in Siberia. For the rest, he was a charming and witty man. He, too, used to come and visit us in our dressing-rooms ; he was made much of because of his mines. He sent me by his secretary an insignificant little diadem, with wretched little diamonds here and there.

“ M. le Comte begs you, mademoiselle, to accept this small remembrance as a homage to the artiste.”

There was nothing to be said.

“ Thank the count, monsieur, and tell him that,

as an artiste, I am flattered and grateful for this mark of his esteem."

"He asks, mademoiselle, permission to pay you his respects?"

I receive the count in my dressing-room, so why should I refuse to receive him at home?

"He can come, monsieur."

He did not wait long, the rich miser! He came next day.

"I very much appreciate your kind remembrance, count."

"I offer it to the artiste, and still more especially to the woman."

"Ah, monsieur le comte, you spoil your present. As an artiste I should receive it; as a woman, permit me to refuse it!"

I returned him his little casket. He was very out of countenance.

"Well, but can I not hope for a little return of the sentiments with which you inspire me?"

"You set about it very strangely. Do you never forget the shop, monsieur le comte? That is poor policy. No, monsieur le comte, I haven't the least desire to reply to your noble sentiments. Take away your present. Look at it, examine it; there is nothing missing there but good taste."

He disappeared with his box. Some days afterwards the very tiny, modest diadem adorned the forehead of my pretty comrade B——

(There, dear, only you can turn these nothings to account.)

I removed then to take some very beautiful apartments in the rue Louis-le-grand on the first floor. I left from there for Russia. Each time I pass along that street I am unable to stop from raising my head to the great balcony. I can still see the three shutters I had placed in the drawing-room. What recollections and what regrets at not having understood life such as it is, practical and commercial. The ideas of those days were not all money ; one did not torture the spirit by speculations. Let us not regret having passed a pleasanter life, of having only experienced the ambition of an artiste and the feelings of a woman ; which, if they do not enrich you, they do not degrade you—they make you happy. These recollections keep your emotions always young, and that is better than gold.

I often saw Prince Metternich, the Austrian Ambassador to the Court of France. This famous diplomat was very gay and quite unconventional ; very simple, witty and ironical ; the great diplomat was fond of laughing.

“ I have a box for the Palais-Royal. Be kind and come there with me ; we will laugh.”

“ I don't laugh so much as all that at such nonsense. I like Brunet's naïveté every now and then ; but as for you, you like to pass all your evenings there. You must simply adore farces. When you come to our tragedies you must bore yourself to death ; acknowledge you come rather to talk in our dressing-rooms. As you are a serious man, I

have a strange opinion of you. My dear prince, sooner or later I think you will do us great harm."

"Ah! dear pretty one, you dabble in politics and would like to read into the future. Who can know what is reserved for us? At the moment I am most kindly disposed; if I change, you shall know about it, great diplomat; it will not be my fault, but that of events."

"Yes, you will be guided entirely by the interests of your country, without forgetting your own. My dear prince, you are too well acquainted with the caprices of fate to sacrifice yourself entirely, are you not?"

"Come, let us talk of Brunet; that is much more pleasant."

The charming Metternich used to speak in this strain, and the Emperor was wrong not to buy his support at Dresden. He did us all the harm I had predicted.

(With regard to the matter, say whatever you please, my dear.)

He came to offer to take me a drive with him.

"I appreciate your kindness, but you make me get into a detestable cabriolet, which you drive yourself, and which frightens me horribly. Those drives are very boring and I want no more of them. I prefer to talk: it is more amusing. When you take the reins of your nasty horse not a word is said. That is too German! I enjoy myself much more at Raincy at Ouvrard's: there are jolly parties there. We go there with

Talma, Fleury, Armand. It is a magnificent place."

"Ah! so you visit the great financier?"

"Financier, if you like, who receives his friends like a great lord. Lately we spent three days, Mlles. Devienne and Mars, and our three companions Talma, Fleury and Armand. The time passed quickly. How pretty the country is, and there are some charming open carriages, but drawn by two wretched horses which resemble those of M. Demasine. That man is odd: he loves unheard-of, striking contrasts. It is the magnificent château which Junot inhabited for a long time, where every luxury is displayed. There is a most delightful bath-room there, with an enormous basin completely of marble, where the water flows from all directions, like the baths in the Pyrenees. One can bathe in company with twenty or thirty persons at once. There are charming decorations: delightful paintings, ottomans, carpets—in fact nothing is lacking. This charming and distinguished financier is a Lucullus. Delightful dwellings are scattered here and there on this magnificent estate. We always stay at the cottage, which is thatched outside, but inside is the last word in elegance and comfort. Then, to complete the contrast, there are two raw-boned horses; just fancy!"

"Do you often go to this beautiful country-house?"

"As often as possible."

“Besides, M. Ouvrard is a delightful man with most distinguished manners. He is intelligent, shrewd, a man of few words, and self made. He was of a humble origin ; they say he was the son of a grocer. He does not boast much about it. I once said to him, ‘There, dear Monsieur Ouvrard, you do things grandly, but you are a man without heart since you left off your blue apron. You had a heart then, though you wore it behind your back, and you have never put it back in the right place since.’

“He laughed good-naturedly and was not the least offended at my pleasantry. But, dear prince, the truth is that he has not a heart at all, but a great deal of pride. In his person he is simple, yet elegant ; somewhat affected, and anxious for admiration, though he never appears so. He is always wonderfully well shod, and he is right ; his feet are very small. He is always dressed in knee-breeches, silk stockings, buttoned coat, waistcoat and white tie, and his linen is remarkable for its quality. He is a good-looking man. His eyes, perhaps, are small, but his mouth is very pretty, with superb teeth and a charming smile. Oh, he has had his love affairs and will have them yet. The beautiful Mme. Tallien was his slave for a long time, and a large progeny resulted from this union, yet he deceived her, beautiful as she was. Poor dear Ouvrard was a Lovelace. He fluttered from flower to flower. He could be constant, but faithful never.”

(*I give you all these details. Ouvrard is a man who has made a considerable mark; he is worth speaking of.*)

“But, dear Mademoiselle George, it seems to me, from the way you speak, that you are likely to join the ranks.”

“No, I assure you; not for the moment, at least. Besides, talk to Mars about it, she will tell the same tale. She will tell you that he is very charming and that one has to be on one’s guard. At Paris he had a mansion in the rue de Mont-Blanc. He used to tell us that he had a dining-room in which the table was worked by a spring. It came up ready served, disappearing and rising again with each course in turn, to avoid the presence of servants. You see that he understands how to do things in style. We did not see this fairy dwelling—he had sold it; but we dined with him at his town-house in the boulevard de la Madeleine, an immense mansion of which he only occupied one floor, for the Comte de Rémusat had all the rest of the house, together with the garden. The *entresol* at Ouvrard’s was scarcely furnished at all; his wife, who was never seen, lived in another quarter. What a singular existence! We were served there, as at Raincy, in true financier style. After dinner, his children came to play with my sister and Mlle. Mars’s daughter. He had a brother, an amiable, good-hearted youth. Our friend Florence used to come with us, and brightened up those dinners a little, which were

sometimes very monotonous. He spoke a great deal of the beautiful martyr, Marie Antoinette. He related a thousand deeds of her kindness, and, among others: One morning—the hour at which the Queen had her hair dressed and used to allow Florence, then manager of the Comédie-Française, to come and take his orders—the Queen was informed that a whole family in tears had come to throw themselves at her feet to ask a pardon for a father and a husband. The Queen rose at once, and all in her morning deshabille, and half-dressed hair, she sent for the sorrowing family, and without losing an instant obtained an entry to the King, and, throwing the family at the King's feet, she did likewise herself to demand pardon. She obtained it, returned with her eyes still wet with tears, and *happy as a queen*. A noble woman so slandered, with a noble mother's heart, which was so bruised, and such a courageous woman in that which was most sacred in her motherly love. They say that during her long and infamous imprisonment she was continually consulting the cards to find out whether her captors would be cruel enough to execute her. The hideous result was always in the affirmative. One gets superstitious in misfortune. Ah, what sufferings that adorable woman endured!"

We were very moved at this tale. It was certainly very fine and sublime to see the great Queen going to the King with such disordered

toilette. What abandonment of herself to do a fine action. Enough of this topic, Florence, we do not want to weep any more. How did you bring about the success of the *Misanthrope*? You gained your spurs as a clever man by this triumph. Come now, tell us all about it.

"Well, the first performance had doubtless produced a great effect, but the receipts were unsatisfactory. Something had to be done. The second performance was also rather tame, and we were relying on tremendous receipts. At the third performance I gave boxes to various gay ladies, who were pretty but possessed no finery. To these I sent gowns, hats and enormous bouquets on condition that they should burst into tears, while some even received orders to faint. What was said was done. The play had to be interrupted several times, the unfortunate ladies were carried into the lounge, doctors were called, and so forth. The trick was resorted to on three or four occasions and the success was tremendous. It certainly cost the company a good sum, but the result was fabulous."

"Florence, you are a great man. To Florence's health!"

"And Lekain, our admirable Lekain, Florence?"

"Ah! yes, admirable! Not like Talma!"

"Come, my dear fellow. Beside Talma your Lekain would have been a trumpery numskull."

Then Florence took off his peruke, crushed it beneath his feet, and posed before us all to imitate

Lekain, who, as a matter of fact, was a great artiste. It seems that in all lovers' parts he was sublime; no one could speak like him to a woman; as Tancrède, Orosmane, Vendôme in *Duguesclin* (is it *Vendôme*, *Valmore*? I don't remember), he was marvellous. He was fat, but passion improved his appearance to such an extent that the women were mad about him. Fleury was a great partisan of Lekain.

"Certainly, gentlemen, he was a lover; he shed beautiful tears in Orosmane, most certainly, but there, love is common. With us it is ordinary, but the fatality placed on Talma's forehead, the remorse, the deep melancholy, the delirium which makes us all tremble! All those palpitating emotions, don't you believe they are greater than your little love insipidities. Who is not a lover? The crown of laurels to Talma, the crown of myrtle and roses to Lekain."

After Florence's furies, a true parody of the fury of Orestes, there was much laughter, and I took him back in my carriage to tease him again. I was very fond of Florence. He had wit, and had seen so much that he had always something to tell you of his amours with the famous Sophie Arnould; stories we listened to with laughter, which we took care to tell again — my poor Florence!

I do what I can to distract myself, still, I bore myself horribly; even the theatre has no longer the same attraction for me. As a matter of fact,

it is a monotonous life. We always play the same thing, there are no new works except *les Templiers*, which makes plenty of money, but which amuses me very little. The Queen is a very bad part which has not moved me in the least. What are we to do ?

"See, old Florence, I am burning with desire to leave Paris ; I am stifled here."

"Leave the Théâtre-Français ? Do you really think of doing so ? You would lose both your pension and your glory, which can only be acquired at the Théâtre-Français. Come, it is the thought of a madwoman. You would lose all your professional chances, and you would leave something else besides the Théâtre-Français."

"That is exactly why I wish to leave and why I shall leave."

"What ! Are you no longer happy as well ?"

"Do not ask any questions. I am tired of the void in my life, that is all."

"To any one as beautiful as you are, surrounded by everything that is distinguished in Paris, every distraction is offered."

"My dear Florence, there is a certain exalted affection which cannot be replaced. Another might be put in its place, but it would be distasteful to me, and it would seem to me an unworthy act. Foreign air, distance, that is what I need and what I want. Still, we have not reached that point yet, let us talk of something else.

"I dined at Mlle. Contat's two days ago,

with Mme. Gay. She is an amiable and witty woman, but, Heavens! how tired she ought to be! She talks well, but she talks without ceasing. Mlle. Contat is very agreeable in her own home, but in spite of everything there is always that charming impertinence of which she has made such an agreeable habit. M. de Parny is a gentleman who is placed, doubtless through his attachment, in a peculiar position. He could easily be taken, in spite of his excellent aristocratic manners, more often for the housekeeper than the future husband of the great artiste. Being very ignorant of their private life, I was quite uncomfortable when Mlle. Contat said to him, 'Please ring, my dear, for coffee,' and a thousand other insignificant details—details to others, doubtless, accustomed to the house, but very strange to me. Mlle. Contat has much wit, but confess, Florence, that she is wanting in tact. One can't have everything. What a miserable pavilion she lives in! A wretched dining-room, no drawing-room, and a bedroom where she receives. It is frightful! Why does she lodge there, Florence?"

"The pavilion touches the Odéon. It is deadly gloomy, but she gets it from the Government. There are many artistes who are lodged for nothing, and quite the great lady though Mlle. Contat is, she accepted the pavilion."

"Isn't Mlle. Contat rich? Still, my dear fellow, she has a carriage?"

"Yes; she lodges for nothing, so as not to give it up."

"She is not rich. No more is Talma, and Mars has nothing. You see your Paris is poverty for artistes. Quick: fresh air! Tell me, Florence, I brought back in my carriage M. de Maupant, Mlle. Contat's son. He is a good young man and very attached to Mars; he should marry her."

"But his name, my dear?"

"His name! Away with you! His name, do you say? That of Mars will help him. That is another of those prejudices which are dying. In England, you see, even great lords marry actresses, and actors like Garrick are buried in the tombs of kings. Talma, we would not like to bury you, honour and glory of our stage! Ah! atrocious prejudices, which dishonour what is beautiful and great. Say, Florence, will you come to England? I will take you."

(My good friend, don't erase that which touches on the prejudices; we artistes want a little lifting up. You will feel that more than any one, and Valmore, too.)

"Ah! it is you, Talma; you see me blushing for my profession! I was speaking of the prejudices which only affect us. We are dishonoured, but still, are we of less account than other people? Are we bad parents? No, certainly not; it is rare to find bad hearts in our set! What wounds us women, far more than you men, is to hear it said, 'Ah! well, she is an actress with whom such and such a count is in love; it won't last!' Really, Talma, that opinion must have hindered

many poor creatures from entering the good way. What is the good when it is not expected of them? As for the dancers, that is another thing! It has been said, the ladies of the Théâtre-Français and the *misses* of the opera. We ought to be flattered by this distinction. Were you at Charmeroy's funeral? She was said to be a charming dancer, though I didn't know her; I hadn't yet made my *début*, and I am not well grounded in that period, so I can be mistaken. She died from consumption. They would not receive her at the church of les Filles-Saint-Thomas (where the Exchange is now). Vestris, who was her comrade and particular friend, was in such a rage he started all over again, followed by an immense crowd which accompanied the mortal remains of the poor woman. The coffin was taken again and replaced. Wasn't that a shameful sight? England is better than we are, Talma. Let us leave for England. If you die, perhaps you will be placed beside Garrick. It is all the same, my friend, for you are certain of your deserts, since you will have no successor, and if it is said, 'The king is dead, long live the king!' it could not be said, 'Talma is dead, long live Talma!' Talma is dead, tragedy is dead! That is glorious, Talma!"

"Your head is in the air, Georgina. What an exaltation you are in!"

"Well, doesn't it affect you at all? See, you are only terrible on the stage; you haven't the least character."

“But, my *bobonne*”—that is the name Talma gave me—“what am I to say to that? Heavens! nothing.”

“Ah! Florence, was Lekain as calm as Talma? Must actors have the footlights to be men?”

“No, my dear, but they use up their nerves by tragic emotions, and love domestic repose.”

“There, you are nothing but disguised burgesses.”

“*Bobonne*, you are very bad-tempered.”

“No; I am sad and discontented with everything. I can’t keep on my chair. Talma, I want post-horses.”

“Florence, you listen to her. She will be up to some mischief, some piece of folly; and she has no sense at all. At any rate, don’t take me into your confidence; I should denounce you. You haven’t the least common-sense.”

“That is possible. But I don’t require the footlights to have strength and will.”

“Say self-love, child. You are wounded to the heart, and meditate a woman-like revenge. You are too young to know that you can’t be avenged in your position. Weep, rage, smash the china, if you like; we should like it very much; we prefer you like that. But otherwise a barrier has been placed.”

“It is true, but it is horrible! After all, dear friend, I have nothing to avenge myself. Of what? Of my—my rather less frequent interviews? Mon Dieu! I had to expect it; but is the heart always prudent, especially at my age? Alas! one believes

that everything is lasting; one is a proper fool. Still, one is happy for some moments, more or less; a first love decides all our existence. If your young impressions experience deception, the whole of your life is nothing more than a distrust of happiness. Once smitten, one is quite cold at heart. It is deserved. Why have I been mad enough to love him whom I ought only to admire?"

"Ah! Georgina, how you do bore us!"

"I think so too; I bore myself. I seem to have pretensions of becoming a philosopher. How stupid I am, dear friends! I give myself all the trouble in the world only to be ridiculous, and to pass off a wit which I do not possess. Let us spend the time talking 'shop'; it is more amusing, and I like it.

"Florence, do you know that Mlle. Contat prefers Caumont to Grandmesnil in *les Financiers*?"

"Why is that?"

"Caumont is more fluent, and easy. Then Grandmesnil has a squeaky voice, which attacks Contat's nerves."

"Still, he is quite perfect in *l'Avare*, *les Femmes Savantes*, etc."

"Yes, but she thinks him too clever; he analyses too much. 'The nerve-shattering fellow,' she said, 'wants to know more about it than the ignorant Molière. Plenty of wit? Far too much of it. The good Caumont suits me better.'"

SECOND PART

LOOSE LEAVES

To Monsieur and Madame Desbordes-Valmore

DEAR good friends, here is a mass of letters which I confide to your friendship, and still more to your indulgence.

I count on Valmore's friendly patience to decipher all this nonsense, and on the heart and wit of Mme. D—— Valmore to enliven them. That is my hope, and hope gives life.

The journal which you will find, and the details about my birth, are quite nice.

Still you must think me very brazen to send you all this nonsense.

I have neither style nor orthography (which is a question of education).

My love and greetings to all three of you.

April 11.

Madame Dugazon held me in such affection that she wanted at all costs to take me away with her ; but my father, of course, did not wish to be separated from his idol.

After her came Molé with the same proposal,

and the same refusal. Monvel made me play Muet, from the *l'Abbé de l'Epée*; he did everything to get me to leave Amiens. It was a monomania to take away poor little Mimi. One can't escape one's destiny; one has to yield to it. All these attempts affected me very little; in fact, they didn't interest me at all. I wanted to play the great parts in opera, and I did not budge from that. My ambition soared very high. I wanted a beautiful spangled dress, like I had seen the best singers wear. I wanted the great parts because I liked clap-trap. "Oh, how I should have liked to play Laura in *Bluebeard*, just for the sake of being dragged along by my hair. . . ." Once my dear mother caught me [after rehearsing this part]. She said—

"Good gracious! Where have you been to get your hair in that state?"

"I have just been playing *Bluebeard*."

I adored *Paul et Virginie* because I had dramatic scenes in it. I was thrown to left and right, when at last the lightning (composed of two or three crackers) destroyed the little ship in which I stood in a chemise and quite dishevelled, and Paul carried me away expiring and dripping. Life was restored to me. I threw myself into my mother's arms, not forgetting my saviour, and the curtain fell amidst general delight.

(*Here is a little rather uninteresting anecdote which perhaps you will find room for.*)

We had to play *Andromaque* at Saint-Cloud.

“How are you going, Talma? Come with me, I will take you.”

“My dear friend, your carriage is too small to take our lot. Will you come in mine?”

“In your wretched chariot, with your two old white horses—your *noble fathers*, as you call them? A nice equipage in which to play prince and princess.”

“My horses are very good; we will go quickly, you may be sure.”

“Fetch your *noble fathers*, then! But don’t dawdle, Talma. I want to dine at Saint-Cloud, and if you are not at my door within two hours you won’t find me.”

Talma was punctual. We went to dine at Legriels, and afterwards prepared for the performance. The heat was oppressive. We were ready before eight o’clock, and did not begin till nine.

During the first act I noticed some bats flying about behind the scenes.

“Bourgoin, have you seen those wretched animals on the stage?”

“No.”

“Heavens! I have a mortal dread of them, and I shall save myself in spite of my respect for our august spectators.”

Behold me on the stage, still a little preoccupied with the appearance of those animals. In my scene with Orestes, an enormous beast passed under my nose. Good-bye, Hermione! Good-bye, respect!

I shrieked and fled. The Consul and the whole house laughed. Talma brought me back.

“Come, you are mad.”

“I am not mad ; I am afraid.”

However, I took my courage in both hands and bowed to the Consul and his gracious wife, to make them see how I apologised. I went on playing, or rather I did not, so much were my eyes fixed on the spot where that wretched beast was in evidence. But it changed its direction and actually went to tease our beautiful Joséphine, who was amused at my fear. She repulsed the beast with her fan, and all the ladies of honour did the same. No more tragedy was possible. The Consul was convulsed for several minutes. The lackeys started in pursuit of the horrible beast, which finally disappeared. Peace returned with its departure, and we made every effort to have the misadventure forgotten, which in the first place was caused by me. We had a great success, and M. de Rémusat came to compliment us on behalf of the Consul and Joséphine.

ON THE EMPEROR'S TASTE FOR TRAGEDY

The bulletin ! It didn't matter if it was in the middle of a scene, there were loud cries demanding that it should be read. The commissioner of the police arrived at the theatre, with his sash at his belt and carrying two candles. It was read in the midst of an emotion, a patriotic outburst and enthusiasm, which one could not

have believed if one had not been a witness. And when the Emperor, after one of his great victories, was present at a performance of Corneille, children, young people and old, broke into a cannonade of applause. But he was always so simple, bowing with such a charming smile, as he sat down and listened with reflective attention to the masterpiece he had commanded. *Cinna* was his favourite work.

MY DEPARTURE FOR ST. PETERSBURG

Why have I departed? Why have I left Paris and the Théâtre-Français? Do I know? No, I do not. This departure, this whim, has come about through a meeting with Count Tolstoy, the Russian Ambassador. For some time I did not see the Emperor—doubtless through my own fault! Yes, very certainly through my own fault! I was bored, I had debts, and I did not want to ask for anything and made all sorts of excuses for myself; but the truest excuse was that I wanted a change of air, of foreign air. Ah! how mad a young artiste is! To be disinterested—what stupidity! One cannot change one's nature, and mine was such. Money! what is the good of it? I prefer success. It was stupid! Finally the Ambassador, who often paid me a visit, spoke a great deal to me of Russia and the Emperor Alexander. One of his *aides-de-camp*, Count Beckendorf, engaged me on his behalf to set out.

I said "yes," and the next day "no." It was at a *bal masqué* that the affair was concluded. Count Tolstoy only left me when I gave him my word of honour to sign in the morning. That same night I met young Tchernicheff. People came to tell me of his little intrigues. I amused myself then with his intrigues for a few moments. At this time he was very naive. He said to me, "Don't speak to me. I have a woman in tow who adores me and is very jealous."

"Heavens! jealous already, and you have only been here two days! I shall only believe you if you tell me the name of the woman; of course she is Italian?"

"No, she is not an Italian; she is Mlle. George!"

A burst of laughter disconcerts my presumptuous Russian. I did not guess at that time that this innocent would do so much harm to France in betraying the plans of campaign. An infamy!

Next day I signed. I had a friend who sold me a passport for a hundred louis—a friend could not do less. I made all my preparations in the utmost secrecy. Florence, and my poor dear Talma, were the only ones in my confidence. I had a very ungrateful heart, and left my father whom I adored, my young sister and brother, and my sick mother. Youth is truly selfish: I left everything I loved, and why? My mother, whom I should never see again, was ill; if I had been able to think I should have remained without hesitation: one never wishes to believe in eternal

separation. Then I was never told of my mother's danger ; I always thought that everything reached me. The first misfortune was waiting for me : my mother dead at forty-three ! At this news all my youth disappeared ! I have experienced nothing but disappointment and remorse.

I am anticipating, and I am allowing myself to ramble. That is my life, my character and my nature.

Everything was ready. I was about to leave, and I took with me what I fancied. I had just created Mandane in Debieu's *Artaxerxes*. I played it three times, and set out on May 7, 1808. I embraced my mother without saying good-bye to her, and at noon I was in the cab to join at the first stage the *calèche* which was waiting for me. I did not rest a minute till Strasburg, hoping to arrive there in good time to cross the Rhine. Unfortunately it was too late, and we were forced to sleep in Strasburg. I was all anxiety at the opening of doors, which we listened for impatiently. We crossed the bridge . . . we were on foreign soil. A little later on I should have been brought back to Paris : the telegraph would have played its part !

On arriving in Vienna I was at once summoned to Princess Bagratian's, a young, pretty, witty woman, filled with that charming grace which places you at your ease at once. I found there all the high aristocracy of Vienna : the Prince de Ligne, with the distinction and grand airs of

his high birth, but without pride, and Cobentzel, who is quite well known.

I was with the princess when I heard a woman's voice crying, "Where is she? I want to see her."

"Heavens!" I said to the princess, "who is she, then?"

I always thought that they were coming to take me back to Paris. I hid behind a screen, and she began to laugh.

"Calm yourself, my dear; it is Mme. de Staël."

Mme. de Staël was very enthusiastic and very noisy. I passed some time with her and was loaded with compliments which I shall certainly not repeat, but said by such a charming and witty woman they were very gratifying. You find yourself more than flattered by the praises she throws at you, doubtless with exaggeration, but at any rate you receive them, and at bottom you are put at your ease by them.

I remained in Vienna eight days in the midst of that great world and that great ease, which gives so much charm to really good manners, when at last the French Ambassador sent me word that it was time to place myself *en route* again.

VIENNA

Drives—The magnificent Prater—Description to be made of the town: small, narrow streets, lofty houses—Superb St. Josephstadt—Entry through the

lanes—Beautiful houses, narrow streets—Black Town—Make some researches thereon.

Really great lords are a type it is impossible to imitate. They have such a perfect tone with them, so much easiness and grace without side; they can never be mistaken. Watch men and women entering a drawing-room. By the way in which they enter and approach you you are impressed. On that side the true nobility, on the other the parvenus. But still there are the same surroundings and the same taste. Well, no; all that is subordinated and used in a way which indicates the habit of luxury.

(You will have to say something charming.)

I left Vienna with regret; Princess Bagratian was so charming and her conversation so witty. I thought I should never meet such a person again. This time I left with a German servant who spoke French. Heavens! before reaching Vienna what amusing and exasperating scenes there were! Knowing no German it was only possible to live by signs; if you wanted an egg you were obliged to imitate a fowl; some milk, a cow, and to make the gestures of a woman who is patting butter. And for meat? My uncle was charged with the duty of imitating an ox, or a sheep. I laughed till I was ill! And to pay we held out our hands filled with ducats: they could take as many of them as they wanted. And they wanted very much! Post travelling is a mockery. It was quite useless for me to say to the postilions, "Quicker, I am in a hurry." I used to

make signs to them that I was hungry or was indisposed. But it was no good; just a gentle trot, and no more and no less. Ah, the obstinate wretches, I could have beaten them!

At this time the inns were detestable. My poor Paris, how I regretted you, and how I cursed the Ambassador! But still we were travelling in a magnificent country.

(Speak about Germany and give some nice descriptions of that beautiful country.)

We arrived in Poland at Vilna. My arrival was known. The governor paid me a visit and begged me to dine with him the next day. He held a reception, and there was a large gathering of charming women. Polish women are so gracious! I had to recite some verses, and their politeness accorded me a great success. Their thanks would have been quite enough for my complacency; but they surrounded me with a thousand attentions and fussings, and gave me unheard-of praises. I took it all as I should. Quite tired, I had accepted that invitation, and they had thanked me for it. In spite of their polite enthusiasm I was very glad to return to my hotel, to get some hours of repose there, and start off again. I was in a hurry to reach St. Petersburg.

(Speak here of Vilna.)

ST. PETERSBURG

Reception at the Grand Duchess Catharine's, sister of the Emperor Alexander, and married to the Duke of Oldenburg.

Fête at Count Strogonoff's, a charming old man, very fond of artistes and manifesting his enthusiasm by bursts of laughter. Amélie, the Empress's sister, was present at the fête and crowned me herself. Next day I received from Count Strogonoff a string of fine pearls, attached to a crown offered to Melpomene—George.

The Prince of Würtemberg, brother of the Dowager-Empress, presented himself as his own valet, and begged me to accept a ring of magnificent diamonds and a purse like a collection-bag in red velvet, filled with louis.

DEPARTURE FROM ST. PETERSBURG

January 28, 1813. Finland—Viborg.

After all these disasters, I would not have remained away from my dear country for anything in the world. In spite of the most brilliant offers, nothing could keep me. I lost my pension—that was too small a consideration to keep me one day more. I was wrong. I suffered so much during the time of the war. I ought to say, however, in the midst of the disaster which must have delighted the Russians, I was treated with really unheard-of indulgence. The French were obliged to illuminate when the Russian army returned with its climatic victory. I, who lived on the most frequented promenade, shut everything up to make my windows as black and sad as my poor heart. It was reported to the Emperor, who had the generosity,

far from making a crime of it, to reply, "She is a good Frenchwoman. Let her do it; I will not have her visit Siberia for that." We set off then: I say "we." I wished to pass through Sweden and stop at Stockholm, and was followed by a part of the company, Duparcy, Varenne, Vedel, Mainvielle and his wife, etc. What a journey! We had two poor, thin beasts, who had the greatest difficulty to drag us. You pass two or three hours in this comfortable position, then, to give you a chance of recovery, you arrive and find there is nothing to eat or drink. Then we had to take to a little sledge, only on wheels. I always set out with my sister and a little postilion of eight or ten years. We left in the presence of every one, as usual. We were so brave; but at the sound of some gun-shots in the midst of granite rocks which were really admirable: immense rocks on each side to an enormous height (*to you, dear Valmore, the description*), we saw some nice wolves issue, manifesting the amiable intention of coming to greet us. Ah! this time fear gains the mastery over us. We cry to the postilion, "Return!" Bah! he keeps on! My sister catches hold of the obstinate little brute's belt. She jumps down and struggles with the little fellow.

We had to travel, when the ice still existed, in the little, very low sledges, which held two with difficulty. Sometimes we made two leagues on the ice. We could see the water running beneath the ice, it was so clear. I was always with my sister.

We braved the dangers (*and they were great, I beg you to believe, dear readers*) amidst the shouts of laughter which made our company indignant. We burst into uncontrollable fits of laughter when we looked at each other. We were dressed so funnily, with large woollen boots, fur caps, and dresses padded to such an extent that we looked as if we were tied up like large Bayonne sausages, and for our convenience we always had with us the tremendous bag in which I had put all my jewels and my money.

I had fixed that bag on my sister's arm. She could never separate herself from it and, as she was and is much smaller than I am, she was really grotesque. Looking at her I had to die with laughter, and she, in her fury, threatened to throw the bag on the road if I continued! Ah, those happy times of joy, and youth, and absence from care! How you are regretted and how quickly you pass away! And then to say that all is over and that they can never return!

(All that is very badly expressed and arranged.)

But when everything is reckoned, we do not live ten years of that beautiful existence which is called youth. How very sad! The women will agree with me. If they do not say so they are not truthful. What woman is there, even the wisest, who does not regret the homages which were paid her, even without encouragement? Let us pass on.

At every relay there was a change of carriages. You arrive and it is raining: it pours faster and

faster, an equipage is fetched for you, an atrocious *charrette*; two or three mattresses are placed inside. You spread them in the open for it to rain on them, for the wind to blow, for it to snow—it doesn't matter. My sister fell on to the road into the mire, with her big bag and her big boots, but I was unable to help her, but my laughter was enough to remove the danger. Happily, our caravan arrived at full gallop, armed with guns to face the danger from wolves.

ROCHER DE CHINCKEBER

Only three houses. We were put into a large square room higgledy-piggledy. Ah, what a horror! I shall never stay there. I discovered a cabinet in the frightful room, and obtained permission, on paying plenty of money—indispensable passport—to settle myself there with my father and sister. My bed was made on a great plank, and there I was installed with all my little toilette utensils, which never left me. I made good use of all my perfumes, I assure you. My father slept on the ground. We discovered a small hut, where we had our meals. We had bought some provisions in Finland. Two days afterwards a lady who occupied a cabinet rather like mine, but much more comfortable, as it was lit by a window, and had a good chair and *a bed*, left for St. Petersburg. Money opened the door of this enchanted palace, and we were settled in at last.

My comrades slept on the ground. In that

frightful room there was a woman with us, who was very ridiculous and small, and much younger than her husband. Duparcy, who was always comical with his *sang-froid*, amused himself with all that. This little Mme. Bonacine was very greedy and distrustful. Duparcy led her to believe that we were not quite safe ; so she passed her nights in counting her money, to the amusement of every one. Duparcy used to say to her, " My dear Bonacine, have you counted up ? See you count well ; I mistrust all these half-savages."

I used to go to sleep very late, according to my custom. I had some cards, and told fortunes. The weather did not permit us to cross the gulf. Tomorrow we always waited for. The provisions were diminishing. I was very eager to get on the way again, to pass through Lapland and see Tornéa. The capital is curious. I was completely decided when I saw the Count de Lowers enter, who had just passed the gulf to return to St. Petersburg. He came and consoled me, first by giving and then by fetching some victuals ; there was a great scarcity of food.

Duparcy, who was very good at cooking, had the frightful thought of cooking a dog in the *ragout*. The dish was voted excellent, but we did not take our share. I would sooner have remained on the rock. They should have buried me as they could, not as poetically as Chateaubriand in the middle of the ocean, but in a modest corner with a little earth and a wooden cross. Our

excellent Count de Lowers, who constituted himself my adviser, came to bring me the hope that without doubt we could leave on the morrow. The next day, however, the weather did not seem so favourable. Some wished to make the attempt. Vedel, for example, Charlès, Mlle. X——. They embarked, and we were very disturbed when at nightfall we saw our unhappy companions return worn out with fatigue and fright. Charlès, to give himself courage (and to impart it to the others, he said), had indulged a little in brandy. He had fallen into the water between two blocks of ice, whence they had all the trouble in the world to extract him. In the midst of the terror and of the danger which kept heaping up we could not prevent ourselves roaring with laughter on seeing them wrapped up in such a grotesque manner. Charlès especially, carried by two sailors, dripping wet and drenched and swollen, looked as if he had been stuffed. Nevertheless it was very sad, and I began to worry. At daybreak we rose to see if the weather would at last permit us to quit this terrible abode. The longed-for day arrived. Just after daybreak we were told that the boats were ready. The best and largest was selected for me out of courtesy. On entering that perilous abode my father embraced us both. “Now, my children, God keep us.”

It was really a beautiful sight; in the midst of an imminent danger we were so glad to have left our rock that we all of us sang at frequent intervals. Hooks had to be used to push aside the blocks of

ice which encumbered our passage, sometimes at intervals and then continuously. The men who brought us had long faces, I beg you to believe. The rain which fell on us, for we were quite unprotected, added to the general discomfort. At last we reached the land! All of us began to thank God. We knew the danger we had just run through in looking back. What! we have just passed that gulf covered with ice! We have been able to free that space and pass across and have not been crushed. Ah, thanks, my God; thanks be rendered to Thee!

Bah! twenty minutes afterwards we think no more about it! We crossed to a pretty little town. There was quite a clean inn with little white dimity beds which charmed us. Quick to our toilette in these charming rooms, and then let us sup.

(The name of this first town must be looked up.)

Now where are we to lodge? François runs and keeps us waiting in our carriage at each door where he supposes a lodging could be found. I was ashamed, I confess. We stopped before a house where Mme. de Staël was staying, who, seeing from her window all the carriages, had the politeness to recognise me (to recognise me in that costume!). She makes M. de Rocca come down quickly, and beg me to come up. I decided to, and Mme. de Staël, all amiability, waits on me and runs through all her house to find me quarters. The others waited in the road, and excited the curiosity of the passers-by. Rooms were found at last. My father and my

sister tell me that they are rather good. Rather good ! All the apartments are frightful. Mme. de Staël brought me in her carriage, accompanied by M. de Rocca and her charming daughter Albertine.

At Chiwekle, on the pretty rock, two German travellers were waiting like us, and made the crossing in our company to this first little Swedish town, which seemed a Paris to me (*the name of which must be looked up*).

They were very useful to us in procuring what we were in need of, and we invited them to supper. One of these brave Germans began to sing with his mouth full—

*“ Qu'on est heureux de trouver en voyage,
Un bon souper et surtout un bon lit ! ”*

That, by the way, was true and appropriate, but he sang in such a comical way that we could not contain our hilarity. It was not very polite, I agree ; the poor singer was a little disconcerted. However, that did not hinder him from helping us to resume our journey, after the two days' rest we took in this town.

Here we are in Sweden ! Still more impossible to make ourselves understood. Where could we get some provisions ? We had one German servant whom I had brought with me, François, who spoke a little Swedish. He went on the search, and from time to time discovered country houses. Their masters pressed me to pay a visit, but there was not a word of French spoken.

When François was not there we could do nothing at all. These gentlemen brought us eggs, grouse, bread and wine. Ah, bread is a feast in that country! Their bread is made of shavings. The loaves, which are made in the shape of a crown, are usually passed through a sort of pole hanging from the ceiling (how toothsome they must be!); and for a light they use resin applied to a torch, which is hung on the wall. How gay! At that time all such things were very wretched, mean and cheerless.

(The names of the towns through which we had to pass before reaching Stockholm must be looked up.)

As we drew nearer resources came to us—at least, what was necessary was to be found. We travelled every night by starlight, in such haste were we to deliver ourselves from that incessant torture. We got down at the last town which preceded Stockholm. We tried to make ourselves less ugly; it is no use to deny it, we looked frightful with our bonnets trimmed with swansdown, which were filled with mud. Ah, we made pretty Parisiennes! From this town to Stockholm we at last began to meet people: peasants coming and going, their carts filled with provisions they were taking to market. Life was beginning again. At last we are in the capital! Heavens! what a turn-out! In our open carts we looked like a herd of oxen coming from Pontoise! Everybody looked at us. “Eh! what! Is that the Demoiselle George and her troupe in such a state?” No one thought

of taking out our thin beasts. At that time to drag a carriage in triumph was never thought of, or, to speak more correctly, we did not arrange for it—ovations cost too dear!

We got apartments on the first floor in a good street. The houses are nearly all black through the use of granite. There was a bedroom, a kind of bed-sitting-room for my sister, and one for Mlle. Ursule (?), who had travelled with the Varennes family, and who had attached herself to us and served us for friendship. A clever woman with a charming character. Poor woman!

François, my footman, who was quite good in the kitchen, served as cook and footman. What was necessary for the table was provided, a servant was procured, and here we are installed. That same evening, Prince Bernadotte sent his first *aide-de-camp*, M. Camps, who came on behalf of the prince to place a carriage at my disposal, saying, “Do not disturb yourself. Everything is let for the eight performances which have been announced, even the pit. The box office will not be opened.”

I sent for the artistes who had accompanied me. I gave them half the receipts, and the other half to myself, reserving for myself a whole performance for my benefit. Everything was concluded to the satisfaction of everybody, and the parts were distributed, etc.

French plays were a great event for the inhabitants, who were delightfully hospitable and charming. Before the tragedy we began with a

comedy, which made a complete performance. As an artiste, I was sought out by all the first families. I shall not become the least vain about it ; curiosity existed, and that was all. I refused a good many of these invitations : I have never had a taste for those brilliant gatherings where you appear to go on show.

Without doubt it is flattering to be admitted into high society when it has the good taste to receive you for yourself, without begging you to pay for your welcome by the recitation of a scene, and then, perhaps, two or three more. Thanks ! I have paid quite well for your kind reception.

The Ministers came and visited me. I put off all their invitations after my first performances. I gained time, which I wanted. All my visits I returned immediately, and met some charming families. Everywhere the receptions were full of charm ; but with what happiness I returned to my own circle. No more discomfort ! No more dressing up, which I have always detested. Gaiety was re-established. Visitors three-quarters of the time were present at my dinner : the Count Ostoya, Count Spar, and M. Camps.

As for Mme. de Staël, she never left me at all : she was so fond of me.

Two days after my arrival I had to pay my visit to Prince Bernadotte, and prove to him my respectful gratitude for the protection he was so kind as to give me. Besides, he was a Frenchman. Our interview, too, was long. What a lot of

French recollections ! What question did he not put to me ? He was really happy to recall his fatherland. He told me that the Queen wished to see me, and that I must come next day at noon. "I will obey, prince." Camps, also French, waited for me to take me back ; then Fliger, also French, and a colonel.

"It is no use having a great rank in foreign countries, that is not France ; confess it. With the prince, of what have we been talking ? Of France. With you, of what have we been talking ? Of France. You see quite well that, under your Swedish uniform, your heart is French. You must be ill at ease."

Prince Oscar's tutor, M. le Moine, is French as well. We formed a reunion every evening, because I could not resist their invitations. These gentlemen waited for me to take tea, and remained there to chatter till two in the morning.

I was frequently invited to visit the Queen, for she was very fond of hearing me recite, and she herself used to give me my cue. It was a great honour, doubtless ; but I was far from feeling that there was any flattery in this royal desire, which became, as a matter of fact, a command. But what can one do ? Obey. I had a very independent character, and to force me to do anything was to give me the fancy to resist. I have been very often wrong, and this perverseness of character has made me do many silly things. But what is the good of going back to the past ? It is done, and I

have been a very spoiled child. Bah ! I have had my moments of happiness, too, which would never have existed if I had thought of money. I returned, as always happened after these visits of ceremony, with lively joy to the company of my intimates.

I made my début eight days after my arrival, in *Méropé*. The house was crowded. There were there the King and Queen, Prince Bernadotte, Prince Oscar. The toilettes were most beautiful, the house fine, and the boxes all uncovered, which produced a magnificent effect for the dresses. The curtain rose, the lights were raised, which gives a very gloomy effect, but makes the theatre enormously brilliant. At each act the curtain is lowered, and the lights. I will not speak of the success : it was equal to the welcome of the public. I was very happy and proud. They do not recall one after each act or after a scene, but right after the tragedy, which is much more rational. It was the Italians who introduced these ridiculous ovations, which are often very disconcerting for the actors on the stage whose presence is ignored, and who are obliged to stand and watch while the favourites are recalled before the end of the act. It cuts the action ; but no matter, those who applaud think they have done their duty. Little human vanities ! This will not make you any greater, but you go home counting the number of times you have been recalled, and you deceive yourself to the extent of wishing to forget how all these ovations

are brought about. But your purse knows all about it!

(Dear Marceline, do with that, like everything else, as you wish.)

I could not avoid invitations, and dined too much in the town. I was so tired of it that one day, at the Prime Minister's, where the young Prince Oscar was, and where there were at least forty persons, I said to myself, "Ah! after the repast I am going to be smothered with requests, to aid my digestion, to recite half-a-dozen tragic scenes." Not at all. I am feeling very indisposed, I am obliged to retire. Offerings of orange and lime blossoms. Ah, very likely! As a matter of fact I was dying of hunger. They are forced to put the horses to and drive me back. Ouf! at last I am rid of that wretched crowd. I reached home to find them at supper; my father made a thousand remonstrances.

"What! do you want me, then, to give up my free evenings? Am I to go on enduring as an amusement killing myself with fatigue and boredom? No, certainly not. Quick! replace what you have left on the table, and let us have a hearty laugh. Father, dear, leave me my gaiety; it will pass away soon enough." So I have got a nice evening's liberty. I will rid myself of this heavy dress and wait for our good visitors without formality or inconvenience. What happiness!

Mme. de Staël, on her side, tired me; I had

been twice already to her, to a dinner and a reception. The third time I promised myself to be ill. I wrote to her to tell her not to count on me. I was quite peaceful with my people, and my footman announces Mme. de Staël. Confound the woman! the passion she has for me is too inconvenient.

“Show her into the other room.”

I sent my sister, who made a grimace at the commission I gave her.

“Whatever am I to say to that lady?”

“Tell her that I am sleeping.”

“But you are all of you laughing!”

“Tell her that I am in a fever, and raving. She can believe what she likes of it.”

Really her enthusiasm is nothing but an inquisition. I was sorry for it on Prince Oscar's account, who was really charmingly good-natured, and rarely missed Mme. de Staël's receptions. And of course Albertine was charming as well. Mme. de Staël, it was said, who was clever and adroit, saw in the prince's visits an object she would have liked to have attained. I say “it was said,” *but all the same they made her leave.*

I paid my respects to the Queen precisely at noon, who received me at once with extreme kindness. She was in morning *négligé*, a great muslin dressing-gown *à la Croissy*, trimmed with lace, her head uncovered and dressed quite carelessly. I had not yet played. She spoke to me about all my parts; she preferred tragedy. She asked me a

thousand questions about Paris, the Emperor, about the Court, and my stay at St. Petersburg. She spoke enormously, and with far too much curiosity. I replied very shortly with discretion, because for a queen she asked me some very indiscreet questions. I got out of it as best I could. She must have said to herself, "Heavens! what a stupid!" Well, I preferred that; or better, "She is very timid!" She said to me—

"My dear, the King wants to see you, but he wishes to receive you in full uniform. Wait a little."

"Madame, I am too much honoured in waiting with your Majesty."

Moreover, I was more than an hour with her. The King was announced; he was indeed in full uniform, with sword at his side. He was a man of middle height, thin and suffering, walking with difficulty. Two officers supported him, which did not prevent him from leaning on his stick. He came towards me and said the most gracious things imaginable. He was not such a good talker as the Queen: the French language was less familiar to him. I remained nearly twenty minutes, and took leave of those noble personages.

I went very often in the morning to the Queen, and in fact she gave me my cues. She was very fond of *Méropé*, and did not recite at all badly. Before leaving I made my farewell visit. She took from her neck a quite tiny, very heavy enamelled watch, begging me to wear it as a

remembrance. "It is very modest," she said; "but what can one offer you, my dear, who have such beautiful jewellery?"

It was a royal parsimony at which I smiled very graciously, promising myself, however, to keep the souvenir carefully, but never to wear that ugly little watch.

The evening of my departure I supped at M. Camp's with Prince Bernadotte, who clasped on my arms two beautiful bracelets of fine pearls, with two very lovely diamond solitaires which formed the clasps. On returning, I found M. Le Moine, who brought me on behalf of the prince a diamond ring and a pin of the same stone for my sister. The prince sent me, as well, a lovely, good travelling carriage with four seats. I took with me a maid who was attached to me, and a certain Jules who belonged to the company, and a son of his, a child of eight or ten years. To return to France the journey was costly, and the poor youth was not rich. After eight performances I wanted to leave. It was impossible to remain longer: the war terrified me.

I separated from the other artistes, some of whom remained at Stockholm and others left after us, returning to their dear fatherland.

I set off in the excellent carriage and two carts, one for my luggage, the other for Jules, his son, and my valet.

(Dear Valmore, make some researches on Stockholm: to know, if possible, what should be visited.

There is a statue there of Gustave Vasa in a square. But I do not know if it is the Palace Square: I think so.)

RETURN TO PARIS (1815)

In passing through the place Vendôme I see an immense crowd. Heavens! What do I see? A rope round the Emperor's neck, and those wretches dragging that rope to make the great man fall to the ground. But their united forces will not lower him: he remains on his column, regarding them with a smile of pity. He must be saying that which he has said since: "So those are men!"

But I, when I see this terrible spectacle, become pale and cold. I was just going to throw myself out of the carriage, mad with anger as I was, to oppose—I, a feeble woman—this act of ferocity, when a friend who was with me catches hold of me and hides me in the depths of the carriage, and takes me back to my home, in the rue de Rivoli. It was time: I felt I was dying.

* * * *

Lucien, Queen Hortense, Prince Eugene, Mme. Bacciochi, the white flag, which I saw hoisted without knowing that I saw it.

* * * *

My visit to the Duke of Vicenze, Caulaincourt, on the night when the Emperor lost the empire. M. de Talleyrand had most people around him. The Duke of Vicenze walked home with me, and, crossing the place du Carrousel, which was filled

with Cossacks, Austrians and Prussians. Caulaincourt said to me, "It is a nice walk for Frenchmen, isn't it, my dear Georgina?"

* * * * *

Monsieur Lemercier, I still see you on a day of a performance of *Pinto* at the Porte-Saint-Martin, visiting me, quite excited with what you had just listened to. Bocage was reciting *Pinto*, created in such a remarkable manner by Talma, the great actor.

M. Lemercier made an observation to M. Bocage on some scene, I forget which, saying—

"Stop, Talma did it so, and he got a great success by that means."

"My dear fellow, *papa Talma* did it as he understood it."

At *papa Talma*, Lemercier naturally became very indignant. He had to shrug his shoulders and laugh in M. Bocage's face.

Yes, Talma did it as he understood, and he understood everything with genius; *Nicomède*, for instance, which M. Bocage played as Bocage understood it, it must be remembered.

Bocage pretended that it was necessary to be stupid to play tragedy. Some time after this delicious *mot*, he was playing *Nicomède* at the Odéon.

Some one who was present at the famous performance, and who knew of this *mot* of Bocage, exclaimed after the tragedy—

“ I never knew Bocage had so much cleverness. He is the cleverest man of our age.”

* * * * *

(*Dear Caroline, not knowing where I am in all the scribbling you have, I pass on and will begin the romantic.*)

After a tour in the provinces of a year, with a company of mine which played tragedies and comedies, I returned to Paris in 1829. M. Harel got the rights of the Odéon. The antecedents of dear Harel did not sound good to the ears of the Government of Charles X. Harel, an old magistrate, naturally dismissed for his well-known opinions ! Harel, five years an exile with Boulay de la Meurthe, General Exelmans ! Harel, who had founded the newspaper *le Nain jaune, le Miroir !*

All this was very dangerous, and in no way could it be presumed that he would obtain the management of a royal theatre. M. de la Bouillerie, who liked him, and knew him very well, spoke of it to Charles X, who only asked one question—

“ Is he an honest man ? ”

“ Yes, sire. The proof : five years of exile for having remained attached to the Emperor ; and if he is accorded this privilege he will behave with loyalty.”

“ I ask nothing better. I grant it him, and I consider his fidelity and devotion right and praiseworthy. I should like to have around my person many subjects such as he. They are rare, dear M. de la Bouillerie, are they not ? ”

* * *

Mlle. Contat, the great court lady, with her magnificent insolence, her grand manner, her free tone, her unstudied pretension, her unaffected easiness, her witty comedy, her enchanting smile, her frank gaiety of the great world of Louis XV—Mlle. Contat!

* * *

To Mme. Valmore.

Here I have given you all my impressions. Let me tell you them, and do not blame me. There are no details, just my impressions, my feelings: that's all.

At that time, for instance, our confidants were detestable, they listened treacherously to all the secrets of their princes and princesses. Ah! the wretches, to make their king and people suffer.

* * * * *

I heard Mme. de Staël tell, "I found myself placed at table beside a good talker, who, sitting between Mme. Récamier and myself, thought he was obliged to be witty, and after ripe reflection he delivered the stupidest impertinence I ever have heard: 'I am sure to find myself placed between beauty and genius.' 'Yes,' said I to him, 'without having either the one or the other.'"

* * * * *

Joséphine was very fond of flowers, and Mlle. Raucourt was a great lover of them. They used

to make exchanges. You must remember, dear Valmore, that Mlle. Raucourt had a conservatory made at la Chapelle, in which she shut up her rarest plants. During a journey, Joséphine stopped at la Chapelle ; she came to visit the conservatory and bring some plants. This little detail is to establish the intimacy of Joséphine with Mlle. Raucourt, and the familiarity which made her call her Fanny.

Here is the book of which I was speaking to you, dear Valmore, which speaks of Joséphine's love for flowers, and especially for jasmine, which reminded her of her own beautiful country.

* * * * *

In speaking of La Fontaine, some one said, " He has the genius of simplicity."

" No ; La Fontaine had the simplicity of genius."
(*In George's writing*: " Put this *mot* to the credit of M. Taylérant " (Talleyrand).)

JULES JANIN

Janin's witty indifference. His fictitious enthusiasm. He loved to destroy what he had made ; contradiction of himself amused him.

ON THE ACTOR'S ART

Lessons in declamation ! How ridiculous this has always seemed to me !

How can a master think of changing the nature of a pupil ? He can be guided ; but can a soul and

a heart which he has not be given to him? No. Can nobility be given? No. If you are awkward, will you learn to walk? And will an awkward gait be given to you? No. As to passion? Are gestures learnt—what nonsense! As to appearance? Gestures, appearance are all derived from what you experience, from the sentiments which pass within you. How is that to be learnt? Can one learn gestures in the world? You begin a conversation, the subject interests you, gradually you become animated, you gesticulate correctly, your countenance reflects what you experience. At your side you have some one who is impressed with nothing, and listens coldly. Tell her, then, to have an appearance; she will be grotesque, and that is all. No, lessons are ridiculous. There may be advice, and examples of experience of what you are demonstrating to develop a nature. It is possible to learn how *to speak*, but to *play*—No! Give a lesson in acting, then! Are you earnest about it? You must dedicate yourself to the work, bring to it all your care and all your patience; do not be content with giving a sentence or a verse as a cue; recite whole scenes. You will judge the intelligence of the pupil, you will see how he attends, you will judge the impression of his physiognomy, how he enters into the action of his impersonation; but if the duties are guided by interest, if you count the minutes of your clock, you are pursuing a trade. As for the art, it does not exist! A prize really ought to be given to him who should present an

educated artiste. I shall be told that my idea is absurd ; I don't think so at all. Talent is recompensed everywhere in all the arts ; why, then, should not the dramatic art occupy its place ? Why should not the actor who perfects his art receive a prize, like the perfumer who has perfected a soap ? The reason is that the theatre is no longer a serious art ; that women are admitted too easily who only use it as a stepping-stone ; that managers are often allowed, even commissioned, to receive with salaries, or merely nominal ones, pretty women, who, of course, are forced to occupy themselves in another way. Farewell, then, to every artistic future—farewell to art ! Pleasure and apparel before everything ! Unhappy actors ! Unhappy theatre ! What, indeed, is the use of studying for the purpose of hearing it said that you have talent ? Pshaw ! you know very well that it will be said anyhow. Does criticism exist at all for you, Mademoiselles ?

You all have a great deal of talent ; never has so much grace and distinction been seen. You read your paper ; you are convinced, except him who wrote it, a man of brains and taste, who knows quite well that he is deceiving you, but who does not care to hurt you. After all, it is of very little importance !

Criticism for true talent, of course ! but for these little hussies praises without restriction. Of course, it mustn't be allowed to go too far : my article will be read. To-day the pretty women ; to-morrow the artistes,

Oh speculation, you will break into all classes of society !

Money, always money ! Money will kill everything !

LONDON

The second journey of the company to London. Manager, Pelissier.

Obtained from the Duke of Devonshire permission for two tragical performances at the Grand Theatre of the opera (Covent Garden), a thing which had never been obtained before. *Sémiramis*, *Méropé*. The Duke is very charming to artistes.

He received me at his country residence, which I wanted to visit in his absence. A great crowd was there to receive us ; a splendid lunch. Am given the key of his box for all performances.

Invited to a charming reception at his house, where I recited some verses before the most illustrious people in the land. The Duke himself clasped a bracelet on my arm, which had no value except for the way in which it was offered. Now-a-days, Pactolus does not flow so broadly for us artistes, or we tell less lies.

PLAN OF THE MEMOIRS

My childhood, many details of which are written. My father, manager of the theatre. Actors from Paris perform, such as Molé, Monvel. Mlle. Raucourt, commissioned to get a pupil for tragedy,

begs my father to let me come to Paris for tragical studies at the Théâtre-Français, the Government giving 1200 francs pension.

My visits before my débuts, under the ægis of Mlle. Raucourt, to Ministers and the family of Napoleon.

My débuts; the Comédie-Française; visits to Dumesnil, Clairon, etc.

My impressions on Talma, Monvel; Mmes. Constat, Mars, Devienne, the last appearances of Larrive.

The Consulate, Talleyrand. Lucien. The First Consul's mother. His sister Bacciochi. Joséphine. Queen Hortense. Prince Eugene.

My relations with the First Consul. The Empire. Many very intimate details about this liaison.

My departure for Russia; stay at Vienna. Society (Viennese); Princess Bagratian, Mme. de Staël, Prince de Ligne, Cobentzel. Crossing the Vilna.

My arrival at St. Petersburg. My début. The Queen-mother, the Emperor Alexander, his brother Constantine, old Count Strogonoff, the young Empress, and many other people.

My stay of five years, and departure after the sad war. Journey to Stockholm, the Queen, the old King, Prince Bernadotte. My performances. Mme. de Staël again.

Departure for France. Pass the armies to reach Hamburg. General Vandamme.

Dispatches announce my arrival in Dresden.

Twenty-four hours in Brunswick. The King of Westphalia. Remitting him letters on behalf of Bernadotte.

My arrival at Dresden. The same evening I saw the Emperor, who summons the Comédie-Française; commands Talma and Saint-Prix for tragedy.

Return to the Théâtre-Français, and restitution of all my rights.

General Lauriston.

Departure of the Emperor for the Isle of Elba. Return of the Bourbons. The Duke de Berry summons me to the Tuileries for a denunciation. Very witty of the Duke to call me a beautiful Bonapartist!

“Yes, prince, it is my flag, and will be always!”

Interview with Louis XVIII about the Théâtre-Français.

Two journeys to London: one alone, the other with Talma. Reception at the French Ambassador's. *Osmond*. King George present.

Because I had exceeded my month's leave, the Duke de Duras profits by it to exclude me from the Théâtre-Français. I am delighted; my Bonapartist sentiments procured me this benefit.

I make a tour in the provinces. On my return the committee of the Théâtre-Français come to ask me to return. I have very little desire to. Find-

ing myself in the midst of intrigues, Duchesnois threatening to leave, it all decided me to ask an audience of Louis XVIII to obtain my liberty, and pass to the Odéon. The comptroller of the King's household, General Lauriston, obtained a performance for me at the Opéra. Talma, Lafont not being able to appear there, was commanded. I played *Britannicus*.

The second act of *Marriage de Figaro*, played by Firmin, Gonthier, Jemmy, Vertpré, Bourgoin and myself. We were very bad.

A benefit of thirty-two thousand francs.

I began my touring again in the provinces with a small company.

There is a cabal at the Odéon ; I remained.

There is some talk of the Odéon under the management of M. Harel, under Charles X. A company there composed of Lockroy, Ligier. Bernard, Duparcy, Vizentini, Mmes. Moreau, Noblet, Delatre.

Romanticism : First night of *Christine*, by Frédéric Soulié ; *la Maréchale d'Ancre*, by Vigny ; *Christine*, by Dumas.

Tragedy : *Norma*, *Fête de Néron*, *Revolution of 1830*.

Porte-Saint-Martin.

Victor Hugo.

Alexandre Dumas.

Well, there are plenty of things to say. Now

there is quite enough for you to know if it is suitable. Yes or no !

NOTE BY THE EDITOR—How regrettable it is that this fine programme should not have been pursued to its goal ! How interesting George's notes on the débuts of romanticism would have been ! How curious it would have been to have had her recollections and appreciations of Victor Hugo, Alfred de Vigny, Alexandre Dumas, on Marie Dorval and Frédérick Lemaître ! But, unfortunately, she stopped at what she has left us.

THIRD PART

CORRESPONDENCE OF MLLE. GEORGE

*Letter from Mlle. Raucourt on the subject of the débuts
of Mlle. George.*

La Chapelle Saint-Mesmin, the 4 . . .

(The corner of the letter is torn.)

I am very grateful, my young friend, for the kind letter you write me and the details which it contains. Very certainly one of the first things I shall do on reaching Paris will be to profit by the entry which you have procured for me to your honourable protectors. Incapable of requesting the favour for myself, I shall ask it with fervour for her whose lot I am anxious to determine. At this moment she is a little indisposed, which annoys me very much, because it hinders her work. I have only received news of Paris through you, but I still count on being there within eight or ten days at the latest. Mme. George and her daughter will leave before me. There is some marauding game going on for Mlle. Duchesnois. It is not natural that she has stopped her débuts not to resume them. The perfidious Florence, who has so ingeniously made Mlle. George fail

here, is working dourly to make her really fail in Paris; I am inclined to believe it, at least, after what you send me.

Come, courage! With good dispositions, physical attractions, powerful friends, we shall carry off the victory. I say *we* because you have always shown such real interest that I am pleased to believe we make a common cause.

Everybody at little la Chapelle is very anxious to be remembered to you, and sends a thousand kind greetings. My friends from Paris leave to-day. We have often talked of you and that jolly evening.

Poor Mme. Suzy is dangerously ill.

Adieu, young friend. My heartiest greetings.

RAUCOURT.

To Monsieur Lafont, artiste of the Théâtre-Français of the Republic, rue Villedo, Paris.

To Monsieur Lemer cier of the Académie-Française.

B——, whom I have seen, dear Monsieur Lemer cier, and who ought to have given you an account both of our intentions and his last visit to Picard, should have acquainted you with all that has passed.

I am convinced that your opinion will be mine, and that you will not share the views of your colleague, whose conduct I fail to understand.

Why do you wish to engage me for three years? Why don't you wish to attach me as a member at the Odéon? Why not receive my

sister? In fact, why don't you hasten to make an end of it, and break the ice with the First Theatre, with regard to which I am negotiating?

I understand with real regret that Victor is no longer taking part with the Second Theatre. We are deprived of a young man whom we shall not replace any more, who was promising for the future.

That causes me fear, and makes me guess at a near dissolution.

I am not the less sensible, dear Monsieur Lemercier, of the interest of which you have given me proof in this circumstance.

I know that busybodies, without any claim or mission, and without any approval on my part, have madly interfered between Picard and me. I have left the letters which were written to me without a reply, and have replied to *you only*, because I must recognise in you an estimable man and a necessary friend.

However, the papers have spoken, and it can only have been M. Picard who dictated, and who will no doubt have thought that I was burning to place myself under his power, in which he is very much wrong, for, but for you, I should have waited before taking any steps.

See, then, my dear Monsieur Lemercier, things seem in the same state, and I presume they will remain there for a long time, if M. Picard waits for fresh overtures on my part.

Fortunately I am not in need of either théâtre ;

if either wants me (which I do not pretend), I do not desire to be in the position of being unable to accept. But you understand quite well that I must pursue the plans which I have confided to you.

Accept, dear Monsieur Lemercier, with the expression of my gratitude, all the good wishes possible for yourself, and believe in the value I attach to a friendship which I shall force myself to deserve in all the occasions of life.

GEORGE WEYMER.

Caen, January 6, 1820.

Paris, September 14, 1821.

MINISTÈRE DE LA MAISON DU ROI,

I hasten to inform you, sir, that the King, by an ordinance of to-day, has consented to authorise Mademoiselle George Weymer to play at the Second Théâtre-Français. Will you then in consequence inform her of this decision, as well as the members of the theatre, so that the conditions of the engagement contracted between them and Mademoiselle George may be carried out.

I am, sir, your very humble and obedient servant,

Secretary of State to the King's Household,

(Signed) M. DE LAURISTON.

Monsieur Gentil, manager of the Second Theatre.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I am sorry not to have seen you this morning. That which you came to propose to me

is quite possible, but the figure is a little too *economical*. If you can come to-morrow morning I will wait for you. There is no time to lose if I am wanted to play on Sunday. If you were free this evening I would not go out. Suit yourself between this evening and to-morrow morning.

GEORGE.

My regards to madame, please.

Monsieur Porcher, 10 rue de Lancry.

MY DEAR MADEMOISELLE TILLY,

I ought to come myself and thank you for all your gracious kindness; but for three days I have been a little indisposed. On Monday I propose to see you. If it is not indiscreet to ask you for a small box for myself in the evening, you would oblige me. However, I would not like to upset your arrangements; I know what a first performance costs.

Heartily yours,

GEORGE W.

My thanks and greetings to M. Tilly.

MY DEAR MADEMOISELLE TILLY,

You must, you and M. Tilly, consider me not very polite, not having yet been to thank you both for your great favour; but when you know that I have been ill since Friday you will not accuse me longer. Now I am going to ask you to take no engagement for *la Tour de Nesle*,

should any one come and ask your consent to such a proposal.

I shall have to talk to you on that subject. If it is possible, don't give your word before I have the pleasure of seeing you, which will be in a few days.

Please accept, you and M. Tilly, my kindest regards.

GEORGE.

On April 30, 1906, M. Noël Charavay sold one of George's autograph letters to Harel (le Havre, September 20, 1839; a page and a half quarto).

In this curious letter she gives him an account of the results of her tour. She ends thus—

“Good-bye, friend of my life. I love you with all my heart and soul. I am yours till my last breath.”

To Théophile Gautier.

Sunday (April 1845).

SIR,

You have always shown me an interest I have never dared to solicit. Permit me to tell you that has been a source of no little pride and then confidence to me, and I am giving you a proof of it to-day in asking all your support for *les Pharaons* and *Nephtys*.¹

The success begins to be very great; you will render it immense by writing about it and protect-

¹ See the article by Th. Gautier in *la Presse* of April 14, 1845.

ing it. As for me, I shall be very happy and very grateful for the kindness with which you welcome my efforts.

Accept, sir, my kindest regards.

GEORGE.

(Collection of M. le vicomte de Spoelberch de Lovenjoul.)

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Mlle. Mélingue is to-day playing *Mérope*. Will you, if you give a notice of this performance, recall in a few words the success which Mlle. George has so many times obtained in this part? Nothing will prevent the justice rendered to Mlle. Mélingue being interfered with in any way by the useful recollection you would be good enough to give Mlle. George. She is travelling at the moment, and perhaps for some time. A cheer of recognition on the occasion of the performance of *Mérope* will only be very natural and very favourable to the *commercial result* of Mlle. George's peregrinations.

Two words only I repeat—*Multa paucis*.

You know all my old friendship for you.

HAREL.

July 26, 1848.

Monsieur Janin, 20 rue de Vaugirard.

To Théophile Gautier.

August 28.

SIR,

You are always overflowing with an amiable and useful kindness for me.

Your article of last Monday, which was sent me to read yesterday, is a new and very obliging proof of the interest you have shown for me for a long time, of which I am very sensible.

Accept, sir, I beg, the expression of my lively gratitude and the sincerest regards of your devoted servant,

GEORGE.

(Collection of M. le vicomte de Spoelberch de Lovenjoul.)

To Théophile Gautier, 2 rue Navarin.

SIR,

I should be very charmed if you would give me some hours of your time at the performance this evening.

Permit me to count on your presence, and accept, please, the assurance of my sincere regards.

GEORGE W.

(Collection de feu M. le vicomte de Spoelberch de Lovenjoul.)

Letter of a playgoer to Jules Janin on Mlle. George's performances in the provinces.

MONSIEUR,

She who was formerly one of the glories of the French stage, the most beautiful, and one of the most brilliant women of this century, Mlle. George, in fact, has come to the point, after a career so long and so active—in fact already far too prolonged—of dragging along her miserable existence in the gloomiest villages, and of appearing

on stages where the most obscure actors from Paris would blush to perform.

We were at Saumur some time ago. George was performing in the town, escorted by some poor wretches she had gathered round her. *Mérope* was given, and the bill announced, *if there were no more people than last time the money would be returned*. This piqued our curiosity, and we went to the theatre; we counted some forty people in the house. There was a performance, so Mlle. George apparently found the receipts sufficient.

We were then a witness of the most lamentable spectacle which could be unrolled before us. The actress appeared, almost beautiful still; but in a hall half as large as at the Palais Royal. Illusion is impossible, and the wrinkles, white hair and monstrous figure, the hoarseness, unsteady gait, the cracked voice, the hesitating utterance of the poor actress, stupefied the spectators to such an extent that a unanimous feeling of pity and disgust took possession of them, so that they fled from what they saw before their eyes, and the play finished to an empty house. At each of the performances given in this town practically the same thing happens.

From this town the unfortunate actress went on to Chinon and Azay, towns of four thousand and two thousand souls, where she played before peasants who kept on their hats in her presence!

We confine ourselves to this picture. Would it not be possible, sir, to extract this new Hecuba

of the dramatic art from this unexampled position, whom only complete ruin forces to adopt this wandering life, either by obtaining help for her in whatever way possible, or by organising a farewell performance in the Salle de l'Opéra, in which all the most celebrated actresses in Paris would be happy to appear, the proceeds of which would serve to assure her of an annuity of at least two thousand francs, if the receipts were twenty thousand francs, the prices being doubled ?

In submitting this proposition to one of her comrades, and there are so many of them animated by the most ardent zeal and the most charitable minds, there is no doubt that the suggestion will promptly come to a head.

Mlle. George would readily give her assistance, and the scandal at which we were present, which is prolonging itself and will be prolonged too long, will no longer be renewed everywhere she goes.

You will pardon, sir, the liberty we have taken in addressing you for this purpose, but we thought that for you, who are at the head of dramatic literature, it would be easier than another to realise this project.

Even if Mlle. George was not living in poverty, and was continuing to act in tragedy for her pleasure, it would still be your duty to write to her, in order to open her eyes and make her understand that she is doing herself a great wrong by immolating the name which she has made so famous.

But alas ! this supposition is not likely : and we

believe that necessity alone forces a woman of more than sixty to mount the vilest boards in France.

Realise our project, sir, and you will have done a kind action.

Accept the sincere regards of your very humble servant.

(Signed) A. MOREAU.

May 20, 1847.

P.S.—The Dramatic Association, M. Henri, of the Opéra-Comique, or any other person interested in such matters, might place themselves at the head of this committee.

SIR,

M. Harel has told me of all the obliging promptitude you have shown in according me one of your pieces and several of your artistes for a performance which I shall give on Saturday at the Odéon.

I beg you to accept my expressions of lively gratitude. You are doing me a real service, which has still more value in my eyes that I have no other title than the friendship you keep for M. Harel, who for a long time has vowed you all his.

Accept, sir, I beg, all my devotion.

GEORGE.

May 27.

Letter from Mlle. George to Théophile Gautier, on the subject of her farewell performance in 1849.

MY DEAR MONSIEUR THÉOPHILE,

You are unfindable, so I am obliged to write to you, and beg you to do me the immense

service of dedicating your article on Monday to me. My farewell performance takes place on Sunday, the 27th prox. *Iphigénie en Aulide* ; *le Moineau de Lesbie* ; Mme. Viardot, Lavassor in a vaudeville, dances, etc. Do you want me to have a full house ? You can manage it, if you like. The public will go where you tell it to go. The last performance of Mlle. Rachel before her farewell appearance, which unfortunately will last three whole months. Reunion for one occasion only of these two phenomena. My retirement, which is not without advantages. Mme. Viardot ! Only say all the good of me which, perhaps, you do not think. Make me blush by your praises ! But bring me an enormous public. As for Rachel, say all the good of her which she deserves, and which you think. Give a rendezvous to the élite of society in that elegant hall. If you can find room to speak of some of my creations you will give me pleasure.

You see, monsieur, how I count on the sympathy you have so often shown to me, to dare to bore you so long with my long scrawl.

Permit me to hope that on Monday your article will not find fault with me. You understand of what importance this performance is to me.

Accept my kind regards and deep gratitude.

GEORGE W.

Friday.

Monsieur Théophile Gautier, rue Rougemont. Urgent.

Letter from Mlle. George to Jules Janin, on the farewell performance in 1849, and on Mlle. Rachel.

To-day I am ill ; to-morrow I shall be with you, *at your feet, under your feet.*

Now I am going to tell you how atrociously insolent the great tragédienne has been. She has refused to appear with me ! She did not wish to play *le Moineau* (the Sparrow) and still she sent her claquer to me, to whom we had given free passes and four boxes and some stalls she had asked of me, which I hastened to let her have. Still the old fellow managed to find something to grumble at. Now is the moment to write on the benefit ; it would be very droll. Ah ! Mlle. Rachel, you have indeed been kind ! A few days more and I could become as thin as she. That was her pretension.

My respects to Mme. Janin.

G.

MY DEAR MONSIEUR THÉOPHILE,

As I do not know precisely the hour at which I can meet you (and I am not a very early person) I am going to ask you to be so kind as to indicate to me as near as possible your day and hour. I have a service to ask of you, and as you have always been prompt to be helpful and kind to me, I count once more on your interest to receive me shortly. I await, dear Monsieur Gautier, your prompt and kind reply as usual.

Accept the assurance of my kindest regards as well as of my gratitude.

GEORGE W.

My compliments to madame, if you please.

Mademoiselle George, 44 rue Basse-du Rempart.

(Collection of M. le vicomte de Spoelberch de Lovenjoul.)

Evreux, Monday 6.

My darling, I will give you my news. I know that will please you. I believe, adored friend, that our little business will go well. This evening I am playing Mérope, to-morrow Sémiramis, and doubtless Wednesday at Louviers, which is only six leagues from here; Thursday, perhaps here; that will depend on the receipts. I am told that Bernay and Elbeuf are better. We follow your itinerary thoroughly. Your indisposition will have no consequences, friend. At home, you should not forget the care necessary to yourself. A little patience and all will be well. I leave you, my adored man; *Sémiramis* is just to be rehearsed. To our prompt meeting, my darling, whom I love with all the strength of my soul.

Yours always, yours for my life. 'Till to-morrow.

(Signed) GEORGE.

Kiss my sister for me.

(Letter to Harel.)

On an envelope these words written by George are to be read—

“*Last letter of my (word illegible, perhaps ‘old’)* love.”

One word, my darling, my heart always beats for you. And here we are, alas! separated for some time. Your image will be ever before me.

Bebelle lavishes her attentions on me.

Our dear Tom is with you ; he does his best for you in your exploitation. Your sister will always give me news of you ; you yourself will remember my eternal tenderness ; and your letters will do me much good.

Embrace my son for me.

Yours for ever,

(Signed) HAREL.

Paris, June 1846.

Madame George, first tragedy actress of the Parisian Theatre, at Audelys (Registered).

The letter contained the following quatrain—

De mon visage, en ce portrait,
Avec justesse a-t-on saisi l'ensemble ?
Moi, je n'en puis juger ; mais enfin, s'il te plait,
Vite, dis moi qu'il me ressemble.

HAREL.

A letter from M. Victorien Sardou.

Marly-le-roi, Sunday.

DEAR FRIEND,

I saw Mlle. George at the Odéon, in 1842 or '43, in *Rodogùne* and *Lucretia Borgia*. *Rodogùne* has only left me the recollection of a

truly royal face. The tragedy bored me. But Lucrece Borgia was an enchantment for my nascent romanticism! Mlle. George was then bordering on sixty. She was ridiculously fat. After having crouched at the feet of Gennaro, she could only rise with his assistance. I remember her childish hands attached to arms as thick as thighs, and on her massive shoulders the neck and head of a very matured Juno, with cruel rolls of fat. But nevertheless she was so tragic by habit, in her walk and gestures, in her slightly emphatic delivery and the beautiful sonorousness of her voice, that the evening is always present in my memory. I can still see Lucretia, masked and all in white—which was not conducive to making her thinner—walking on the stage with Monrose's son, who was playing Subetta. I can see her fall under the invectives of the friends of Gennaro. The scenery was odious, the first especially: an old curtain much used, peeling and torn, without visible trace of either design or colour, which the same evening did for Thames fogs in *l'Anglais ou le fou raisonnable*, and in *Lucrece* for the Grand Canal at Venice. The costumes were ridiculous, the *mise en scène* childish. The monks in the last act, with their badly fixed false beards, were the joy of the pit. George triumphed over all that, so much was she, for the public, the very incarnation of Victor Hugo's heroine—absolutely false, by the way!

About 1860, one evening at the Folies-Dramatiques, I installed myself in a corner-box with

Déjazet, when behind us a door opened before a fat lady who, in a raucous voice, cried, “Ah ! Deujazet !” (*sic*).

It was Mlle. George.

While the two great actresses exchanged some pleasant commonplaces I looked with stupor at the Duchess of Ferrara. She had taken a snuff-box from her muff, and helped herself to enormous pinches of snuff, with which she stuffed her nose fiercely. . . .

A remembrance of Napoleon !

I only saw her that once.

A thousand greetings.

V. SARDOU.

Monsieur Cheramy, 11 bis, rue Arsène-Houssaye, Paris.

APPENDIX

NOTE FROM THE COMÉDIE-FRANÇAISE ON THE PARTS FILLED BY Mlle. GEORGE

THE 8 Frimaire, year xi (November 29, 1802), George Weymer made her début at the Comédie-Française in Clytemnestra in *Iphigénie en Aulide*. She played successively : the 17 Frimaire, Aménaïde (*Tancrède*) ; the 25 Frimaire, Idamé (*Orphelin de la Chine*) ; the 30 Frimaire, Émilie (*Cinna*) ; the 14 Nivôse (*Didon*) ; the 3, 4, 25 Pluviôse, Sémiramis and Phèdre.

A quarter Sociétaire in March 1804, in young princesses, grand princesses, queens and mothers.

On May 11, 1808, the fifth performance of Debrieu's *Artaxerxes* was to be given, in which Mlle. George was to play the part of Mandane. In the morning at eleven o'clock the Superintendent received a letter from Mlle. George, informing him that an affair of the greatest importance obliged her to leave Paris for some days. The theatre was closed.

On May 13, a decree of the Superintendent of Performances condemns Mlle. George to a fine of three thousand francs, a sum which it was estimated the performance which she had missed would have realised.

On May 30, Mlle. George's share is provisionally sequestered.

On June 17, in virtue of a new decree, her name is erased from the books of members of the Théâtre-Français.

Mlle. George, who had gone to St. Petersburg, remained there six years, and reappeared at the Comédie-Française in the part of her début as Clytemnestra. She re-entered at a five-eighths share, with the promise of a whole share, which she obtained in the following year. A decree of October 25, 1813, gives her the second place for leading parts, held in chief by Mlle. Duchesnois; she had to understudy immediately Mlle. Raucourt in the parts of queens which had never been played by Mlle. Duchesnois, and play the others alternately with Mlle. Duchesnois.

In 1816 Mlle. George, who had, under the pretext of illness, prolonged by fifty days a leave of two months, was refused her share for that period. Offended, she gave in her resignation, which was not accepted. In 1817 she refuses successively to act the parts which had been given her in *Germanicus* by A.-V. Arnault, and in *la Mort d'Abel* by Legouvé.

Considering that Mlle. George Weymer has nearly entirely, and, without valid excuse, left the theatre, abandoned her profession, and refused to appear and play in new parts, the Duc de Duras decrees, May 6, 1817, that "to date from the 8th of the present month the demoiselle George

Weymer will cease to share in the company of the Théâtre-Français."

On December 17, 1853, Mlle. George reappeared at the Théâtre-Français in a performance for her benefit; she played Cléopâtre in *Rodogène*.

JOURNAL DES DÉBUTS

From 10 to 11 Frimaire (December 1, 1802)

ARTICLE BY GEOFFROY ON THE DÉBUT OF Mlle.
GEORGE WEIMER, PUPIL OF Mlle. RAUCOURT

Not sufficient measures were taken to restrain the extraordinary crowd which such a famous début was bound to attract. All the guard was engaged at the office where the tickets were distributed, while the entrance door, almost without defenders, sustained the most terrible siege; there assaults were made, which I only could make a tragical description of, for I was a spectator and even a very involuntary actor. Chance had thrown me into the mêlée before I could be aware of the danger.

Quaegue ipse miserrima vidi, et quorum pars magna fui, the assailants were animated by the desire to see a new actress, and by the enthusiasm which a celebrated beauty inspires. It is on these occasions that curiosity is nothing more than an insensate and brutal passion; it is then that the taste for shows and arts resembles ferocity and barbarism. Stifled women emit piercing cries, while the men in

savage silence, forgetting politeness and gallantry, think only of opening a passage for themselves at the expense of everything which surrounds them.

The councillors of Priam, on seeing Helen pass, cried, "A princess so beautiful deserves to be battled for; but however marvellous be her beauty, peace is still preferable." And I said on seeing Mlle. George, "Need one be surprised if people are suffocated for such a superb woman? But were she, if possible, more beautiful still, it is far better not to be suffocated, even in her own interests, for spectators are more severe with regard to a *débutante*, when their sight costs them so dear."

Preceded on the stage by an extraordinary reputation for beauty, Mlle. George has not appeared beneath her reputation; her face unites to French graces the regularity and nobility of Grecian forms; her figure is that of the sister of Apollo when she advances on the banks of Eurotas, surrounded by her nymphs, and raising her head above them. Her whole person is made to be offered as a model to Guérin's chisel. When she caused the first lines of her part to be heard, the ear was not as favourable to her as the eyes; the inseparable trouble of such a moment had altered her voice, naturally flexible, wide of compass and sonorous; some defects which could be remarked in the acting and diction must be attributed to the same cause, all of which, though, can be easily corrected. A girl of sixteen who appeared for the first time before such a large and imposing assembly could not have the

full use of her faculties ; it is sufficient that in the first appearance she showed the happiest dispositions and the germ of a great actress. One must wait and not extinguish by carping severity a good talent ready to develop itself. Her very faults have a noble origin ; they belong to an impetuosity and an ardour which she does not yet know how to regulate, which precipitates her delivery and movements ; for in that beautiful body there is a soul impatient to pour itself out. She is not a statue of Parian marble ; she is Pygmalion's Galatea, full of warmth and life, and in some way oppressed by the crowd of new sensations which are rising in her bosom.

The manner of the teacher was to be recognised in the pupil. That could not be otherwise ; pupils nearly always imitate defects, but when they have talent they soon acquire a manner. If Mlle. George were only a faithful copy of Mlle. Raucourt, our theatre would not be unfortunate, and the audience would have nothing to complain about in seeing Mlle. Raucourt at eighteen. The débutante seems destined for the part of queens. Her extreme beauty will perhaps be superfluous for those parts, but her figure, her dignity and grace, the clearness and firmness of her voice, are of the first necessity.

MÉMOIRES DE MME. DE RÉMUSAT (*Published by Calmann-Levy, Vol. I, p. 202*)

It is known that M. de Rémusat protected Mlle.

Duchesnois, doubtless perfectly honourably. Mme. de Rémusat, in her *Memoirs*, is less charitable to Mlle. George. It is interesting to read the lines which she has dedicated to her, and an appreciation by her stepson, Paul de Rémusat, who gives us the opinion of the whole family of de Rémusat.

“Two remarkable actresses (Mlles. Duchesnois and George) made their débuts in tragedy almost at the same time. The one was ugly, but distinguished by a talent which won approval; the other was mediocre, but of extraordinary beauty.¹

¹ Here is a recollection my father has preserved of the rivalry and talent of these two celebrated actresses. The liaison of the Emperor with Mlle. George made some noise. Society (I have a recollection of it myself) was very excited over the controversy touching the respective merits of the two tragédiennes. There was a lively dispute after each performance of either. The connoisseurs and the salons in general were for Mlle. Duchesnois. She had, however, very little talent, and played without intelligence; but she had passion, sensibility, and a touching voice which made people weep. For her was invented, I think, the theatrical expression, “to have tears in the voice.” My mother and my aunt (Mme. de Nansonty) were very pronounced for Mlle. Duchesnois to the point of breaking lances with my father himself, who for administrative reasons was obliged to impartiality. It was these discussions on dramatic art, together with the facility which my father’s duties gave us of following all the events of the theatrical world, which very early awoke within me a certain taste and appreciation of literature and conversation which were scarcely to be expected at my age. I was taken very early to tragedy, and I saw these two Melpomenes in nearly all their débuts. It was said that the one was so good that she was beautiful in them, and that the other was so beautiful that she was good in them. The latter, then very young, trusted to the fascination of her charms, but she

The Paris public grew warm for the one or the other, but, in general, success of talent overcame her with the beauty. Bonaparte, on the contrary, was charmed by the latter, and Mme. Bonaparte very soon learnt by the spying of her valets that Mlle. George had been, for several evenings, introduced secretly into a small remote set of apartments in the château. This discovery inspired her with real uneasiness ; she told me about it with extreme emotion, and began to shed a great many tears, which seemed to me more abundant than that passing occasion deserved.

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“One evening Mme. Bonaparte, more overcome than usual by her jealous uneasiness, kept me with her, and conversed lively about her troubles. It was one o’clock in the morning, and we were alone in the salon. The most profound silence reigned at the Tuileries. All of a sudden she got up. ‘I can’t stand it any longer,’ she exclaimed. ‘Mlle. George is certainly up there, and I am going to surprise them.’ Rather troubled by this sudden resolution, I did what I could to deter her from it, but without success. ‘Follow me,’ she

had not a sufficiently flexible voice, a certain heaviness in pronunciation did not allow her to reach easily to the effects of cultivated diction. I believe, however, that at bottom she had more genius than her rival, and, in being prodigal of her talent in other kinds of dramatic genres, she at the same time compromised and developed it, and she deserved a portion of the eputation it was endeavoured to make for her in her old age.

said ; ‘we will go up together.’ Then I represented to her that such espionage, being scarcely suitable on her part, would be intolerable on mine, and in the event of the discovery she expected to make I should certainly be very much in the way during the scene which would follow. She would listen to nothing, and pressed me so much that, in spite of my repugnance, I yielded to her will, saying, however, to myself that our expedition would amount to nothing, that doubtless their precautions had been taken on the first floor against every surprise.

“So there we were, both marching silently—Mme. Bonaparte first, very excited, I behind, slowly climbing the carpetless staircase which led to Bonaparte’s rooms, and very ashamed of the part which I had been made to play. In the middle of our journey a light noise was to be heard. Mme. Bonaparte turned back. ‘Perhaps it is Roustan,’ she said, ‘Bonaparte’s mameluke, who is guarding the door. The wretch is capable of throttling both of us.’ At that word I was seized with a fright which, ridiculous as it doubtless was, prevented me from listening any more ; so, without thinking that I was leaving Mme. Bonaparte in cruel obscurity, I descended with the candle which I was holding in my hand, and returned as quickly as I could to the salon. She followed me a few minutes afterwards, astonished at my sudden flight. When she saw my frightened face she began to laugh, and so did I ; but we renounced our undertaking.

I left her, saying that the strange fright she had given me had been useful to her, and that I had been very wise to yield to it."

ALEXANDRE DUMAS

Note by the Editor

Alexandre Dumas, who had been one of George's lovers, often speaks of her in his Memoirs. She told him the most curious events of her life, and Dumas in his turn tells them with that eloquence, brilliancy, and good nature which only belong to him. We have not hesitated to make large selections from the Memoirs of the author of *Monte Christo*. These extracts wittily complete George's Memoirs, and permit us to form an exact and complete idea of her appearance.

It is a pity that Dumas' Memoirs are not more read, which, unfortunately, stop too soon, and are as curious as the most entertaining of his novels.

Mes mémoires. Third series. Calmann-Levy,
1898-1899.

A word on the way in which Mlle. George was entered at the theatre and in which she was maintained there. Loved by Bonaparte, and having remained in favour with him, Mlle. George, *who asked the privilege of accompanying Napoleon to St. Helena*, is nearly an historic personage.

Towards the end of 1800 and the beginning of 1801, Mlle. Raucourt, who played leading tragedy parts at the Théâtre-Français, was giving some performances in the provinces. This was the period when the Government, although it had much to do, was not in its free moments ashamed to occupy itself with art. Consequently, Mlle. Raucourt had received from the Government an order, if she met with, on her tour, any pupil not unworthy of her lessons, to bring her back with her to Paris. This pupil should be considered as a pupil of the Government, and would receive 1200 francs pension.

Mlle. Raucourt stopped at Amiens.

There she found a beautiful young girl of fifteen, who looked like eighteen: one would have said it was the Venus of Milo descended from her pedestal. Mlle. Raucourt, nearly as Grecian as Lesbian Sapho, was very fond of living statues. On seeing this young girl walking, and the steps of the goddess revealed in her, as Virgil says, the actress makes inquiries, and learns that she was called George Weymer, that she was the daughter of a German musician called George Weymer, manager of the theatre, and of Mlle. Verteuil, who played the parts of soubrettes.

The young girl was destined for tragedy.

Mlle. Raucourt made her play *Elise* in *Didon* with her, and *Aricie* in *Phèdre*. The experiment succeeded, and on the same evening as the performance of *Phèdre* she demanded the young tragédienne from her parents.

The prospect of being the pupil of the Government, and, above all, the pupil of Mlle. Raucourt, had, apart from some small objections, from which, strictly speaking, the young girl could protect herself, too many attractions in the eyes of the parents for them to refuse.

The request was granted, and Mlle. George left, accompanied by her mother.

The lessons lasted eighteen months. During the eighteen months the young pupil lived in a poor mansion in rue Croix-des-Petits-Champs, which, probably by antiphrasis, was called *l'Hôtel du Pérou*.

As for Mlle. Raucourt, she lived in a magnificent house at the end of the allée des Veuves, which had belonged to Mme. Tallien, which, also doubtless by antiphrasis, was called *la Chaumière*. We said "a magnificent house"; we should have said "a little house," because this mansion of Mlle. Raucourt was really quite a small house in the Louis XV style.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century, a strange century in which things were called quite loudly by their proper name, Sapho Raucourt enjoyed a reputation the originality of which she did not in the least try to weaken.

The sentiment Mlle. Raucourt bore for men was more than indifference, it was hate. The writer of these lines has under his eyes a manifesto signed by the illustrious actress, which is actually a war cry raised by Mlle. Raucourt against the masculine sex, in which the new Queen of the Amazons

summons all the beautiful warriors enrolled under her command to an open rupture with men.

Nothing is more curious for its form, and, above all, for its depth, than this manifesto. However, it is a singular thing that, in spite of her disdain for us, Mlle. Raucourt, in all circumstances where the costume of her sex was dispensable, had adopted that of ours.

So very often in the morning Mlle. Raucourt gave lessons to her beautiful pupil in trousers and a dressing-gown, just as M. Molé or M. Fleury did, and with her was a beautiful woman who called her "*mon ami*," and a charming child who called her "*papa*."

We did not know Mlle. Raucourt, who died in 1814, and whose burial made such a prodigious scandal; but we knew the mother, who died in 1832 or 1833; moreover, we still know the *child*, who to-day is a man of fifty-five.

We know another artiste whose whole career was hindered by Mlle. Raucourt, through jealousy he had the misfortune to inspire in this terrible woman. Mlle. Raucourt appeared before the committee of the Théâtre-Français, exposed her rights of possession and priority over the person whom the impudent comedian wished to take away from her, and, the authority and possession being recognised, the impudent comedian, who still lives and is one of the best-hearted fellows in the world, was chased from the theatre, the members fearing that, like Achilles, Mlle. Raucourt, because of this new Briseis, might retire to her tent.

Let us return to the young girl, whose mother never left her for a single instant during the visits she paid her professor, and who three times a week tramped the long way from la rue Croix-des-Petits-Champs to the allée des Veuves to take her lessons.

The débuts were fixed for the end of November.

They had to take place in *Clytemnestre*, in *Émilie*, in *Aménaïde*, *Idamé*, *Didon* and in *Sémiramis*.

A great affair, both for the artiste and the public, was a début at the Théâtre-Français in 1802. It was certainly a still greater affair to be received as a member. If one was received as a member, as a man one became the colleague of Monvel, of Saint-Prix, of Baptiste the elder, of Talma, of Lafont, of Saint-Phal, of Molé, of Fleury, of Armand, of Michot, of Grandménil, of Dugazon, of Dazincourt, of Baptiste the younger, of La Rochelle; and as a woman, of Mlle. Raucourt, Mlle. Contat, of Mlle. Devienne, of Mme. Talma, of Mlle. Fleury, of Mlle. Duchesnois, of Mlle. Mézeray, and of Mlle. Mars.

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Talma was one of the familiars of the little bourgeois court of the First Consul. He spoke of the débutante Mlle. George; he told of her beauty and the promise she was giving. Lucien's head is fired by it, and, as a regular John the Precursor, he had managed to see through a hole in some curtain, perhaps, indeed, through a wide-open door she who was the topic of conversation for the moment, and

he came to Malmaison to say, with a slightly suspicious enthusiasm, that, at any rate in physical bearing, she was well above the praises which had been given her.

The great day arrived. It was the 8 Frimaire in the year xi (November 29, 1802). There had been a queue at the theatre of the Republic since eleven o'clock in the morning.

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Dumas then reproduces Geoffroy's article on the débuts of Mlle. George.

He quotes the famous line—

“ Vous savez, et Calchas mille fois vous l'a dit,”

and continues thus—

“ Vous savez, et Calchas mille fois vous l'a dit.”

Pardon! I must again interrupt myself, or rather I must interrupt Geoffroy.

The reader knows that there was a custom which was expected of débutantes at this line.

“Why *this* line?” the reader will ask.

Ah! that is true, one only knows things, when one is obliged to know them. I will tell you. Because this line is too simple, and unworthy of the tragedy.

You will not doubt it, monsieur, nor you, madame, who do me the honour of chatting with me? For your servant knows it: he who is obliged to read everything, even Geoffroy. Listen carefully, because we are not at the end. That line being,

by its simplicity, unworthy of tragedy, there was an expectation to see how the actress, correcting the poet, would manage to set it off.

Mlle. George did not aspire to more genius than Racine. She said the line, written with the simplicity of passion, simply and with the most natural intonation possible. There were murmurs. She resumed with the same accent: there were still more murmurs.

Fortunately, Raucourt, in spite of a sprain she had met with, was present at the performance, and had been carried to the theatre, and from one of the small boxes, in the mantle of Harlequin, encourages her pupil.

“Be firm, Georgina,” she cried; “be firm.”

And Georgina—it seems strange to you, does it not, that there was a time when Mlle. George was called Georgina?—repeated the verse with the same simple and natural accent for the third time.

There was applause.

From this moment her success was assured, to speak in theatrical terms.

Mlle. George played the part of Clytemnestra three times consecutively. It was an enormous success. Then she passed on to the part of Aménaïde, *that girl seized with hysterical vapours*, as Geoffroy insisted, and her success kept on increasing. Finally, from the part of Aménaïde she passed to that of Idamé in *l'Orphelin de la Chine*. If the men waited for the débutantes in the part of

Clytemnestra, to know how they would say the famous line unworthy of Racine—

“ Vous savez, et Calchas mille fois vous l’a dit ”—

the women waited with no less impatience for them in the part of Idamé, to see how they would dress their hair.

Mlle. George dressed hers quite simply in Chinese fashion, that is to say, raising the hair from the head and tying it with a gold ribbon.

She was admirable thus, with her hair dressed in the Chinese fashion, as I was told, not by Lucien but King Jérôme, his brother, a great appreciator of all beauty, and who, like Raucourt, kept up the habit of calling George Georgina.

Memoirs—fourth series, p. 10 and following.

The French actors learnt at St. Petersburg of the entrance of the Emperor into Moscow. They could not remain in a hostile city, and set out for Stockholm, where, after a journey of three weeks, they arrived in sledges.

There a Frenchman still reigned, or rather he supported the crown on the head of the old Duke of Sudermania, who was acting as interim king.

Bernadotte received the fugitives like his compatriot, Henri IV, would have received them.

A dramatic stay of three months took place in Sweden, our ancient ally, which was, under a

French King, to become our enemy. Then they set out for Stralsund, where a stay of fifteen days was made.

On the evening of the departure, M. de Camps, one of Bernadotte's officers, came to fetch Mlle. George. Hermione was to be used as an ambassador's messenger. M. de Camps brought a letter from Bernadotte; it was addressed to Jérôme-Napoleon, King of Westphalia. This letter was of the highest importance: they did not know where to hide it.

Women are never at a difficulty in hiding a letter. Hermione hides Bernadotte's letter in the sheath of her corsets. The sheath of her corsets is the scabbard for a woman's sword.

M. de Camps retired moderately assured: swords were drawn so easily from their scabbards at that period.

The ambassadress set off in a carriage given her by the Prince Royal. She carried on her knees a case filled with three hundred thousand 'francs' worth of diamonds; three crowns are not shaken without something falling from them.

Diamonds in case and letter in corsets arrive without accident to within two days of Cassel, the capital of the new kingdom of Westphalia. The ambassadress travelled night and day. The letter was so important, the diamonds such a great anxiety!

All of a sudden, in the middle of the night, a great noise of horses was heard and a forest of lances was seen. A gigantic cheer resounded—they had fallen into the midst of a company of Cossacks.

Many hands were stretched to the door, when a young Russian officer appeared.

Never had Hippolyte seemed more beautiful to the eyes of Phèdre ! George calls him by name.

You remember the story of Ariosto, and that engraving which represents the robbers on their knees. The genuflexion this time was different, being more natural before a young actress than before a poet of forty years.

The hostile horde becomes a friendly escort, which only abandon the beautiful traveller to yield her to the French outposts. Once confided to the outposts, George, her letter and her diamonds, were saved.

She arrives at Cassel : King Jérôme was at Brunswick. He was a very gallant king, very young and very handsome was King Jérôme : he was scarcely twenty-eight years old. He shows himself to be as impressed as possible at receiving a letter from the Prince Royal of Sweden.

I do not exactly know if he received it or she took it ; but this I know, that the ambassadress remained a day and a night in Brunswick. Not less than forty-eight hours, it will be agreed, are necessary to recover from such a journey.

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Volume V, page 306.

My recitations of Christine opened Mlle. George's door for me, as my recitations of Henry III opened Mlle. Mars' house for me.

It was a house of very original style which my good dear George lived in, No. 12 rue Madame, as far as I remember. At the back, in the garrets, Jules Janin was the second tenant; on the first and ground floors, George, her sister and two nephews.

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Aunt George was then an admirable creature, aged nearly forty-one. We have already given her portrait, written, or rather designed, by the cunning pen of Théophile Gautier. She had, especially, hands, arms, shoulders, neck and eyes of an unheard-of richness and magnificence; but, like the beautiful fairy Mélusine, she showed in her walk a certain awkwardness—I don't know why, for George had feet worthy of her hands¹—which dresses of an unusual length added still more to.

Apart from theatrical matters, for which she was always ready, George was incredibly lazy. Grand, majestic, aware of her beauty which had had for admirers two emperors and three or four kings, George liked to remain lying on a large couch, in winter in velvet robes, fur mantles and Indian shawls, and in summer in dressing-gowns of cambric or muslin. Stretched thus in a careless and gracious pose, George received the visits of strangers, sometimes with the majesty of a Roman matron, sometimes with the smile of a Greek courtesan, whilst from the folds of her dress, the openings of her shawls, and the half-openings of her dressing-gowns

¹ Dumas is less severe than Napoleon.—THE EDITOR.

appeared, like the necks of serpents, the heads of two or three greyhounds of the finest breed.

George's cleanliness was proverbial. She made a first toilette before entering the bath, so as not to soil the water in which she would remain for an hour. There she received her familiar friends, fastening from time to time with gold pins her hair, which kept coming undone, and which gave her as it came undone the opportunity to allow her splendid arms to come out of the water, and sometimes even the base of her throat, which one would have said had been carved in Parian marble.

And, a strange thing ! these movements, which with another woman would have been provocative and lascivious, were simple and natural with George, and like those of a Greek in the times of Homer and Phidias. Beautiful as a statue, she resembled nothing more than a statue astonished at its nudity, and she would have been, I am sure, very surprised if a jealous lover had forbidden her to let herself to be seen thus in her bathroom, raising the water, like a sea-nymph, with her shoulders and white bosom.

George made everybody around her clean except Harel.

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At this period, George still possessed magnificent diamonds, and, among others, the gems which Napoleon had given her, which were each worth very nearly twelve thousand francs. She had them made into earrings, and wore them in preference to everything else. These gems were so large that very

often George, on returning at night after having played, removed them, complaining that they were making her ears long.

One evening we returned and sat down to supper. The supper ended, some almonds were eaten. George ate a good many of them, and all the time she was eating she complained of the weight of the gems, and took them from her ears and placed them on the cloth.

Five minutes afterwards the servant came with her brush, cleared the table, and swept the gems into a basket with the almond shells, and threw almonds and gems out of the window into the street.

George went to bed without thinking of her ear-rings, and slept soundly, which she would not have done, philosopher though she was, if she had known that her servant had thrown twenty-four thousand francs' worth of diamonds into the street.

The next day, the young George entered her sister's room and awakes her.

"Well," she said, "you can boast about your luck. Look what I have just found."

"What's that?"

"One of your ear-rings."

"Where did you find it?"

"In the street."

"In the street?"

"As I tell you, my dear. In the street, at the door. You lost it on returning from the theatre."

"No, I had them at supper."

"Are you sure of it?"

“As a proof, they were bothering me, and I took them out and placed them by me. What did I do with them afterwards? Where did I put them?”

“Heavens!” cried the young George; “I remember. We were eating almonds, and the servant cleared the table with her brush.”

“Ah, my poor gems!” cried George in her turn. “Go down quickly, Bébelle.”

Bébelle was already at the foot of the stairs. Five minutes afterwards she returned with the second gem. She had found it in the gutter.

“Dear friend,” she said to her sister, “we are too lucky. Have a Mass said, or else some great misfortune will happen to us.”

Les Belles Femmes de Paris, by Men of Letters and Men of the World. Paris, 1839.

Mlle. GEORGE

Mlle. George has been beautiful for a very long time, and one could say of her what the peasant said to Aristides: “I banish you because I am tired of hearing you called just.” We will not do like the Greek clown, since it is obviously more difficult to be always beautiful than to be always just. However, Mlle. George seems to have solved this important problem. The years glide over her marble face without altering any of the purity of its profile of a Greek Melpomene.

Her preservation is miraculous and quite different from that of Mlle. Mars, who is not in the least

preserved, and can no longer produce an illusion in the parts of leading juvenile than the tradesmen of the Republic can to the generals of the Empire.

In spite of the exaggerated number of jewels she wears, Mlle. George is really beautiful, and very beautiful. She resembles closely a Syracusan medal, or an Isis from the bas-reliefs of Ægina.

The arc of her eyebrows, traced with incomparable purity and fineness, stretches over two black eyes full of fire and tragic brilliance; the nose is narrow and straight, cut by oblique nostrils passionately dilated, and joins the forehead with a line of magnificent simplicity. The mouth is powerful, bent at the corners, and superbly disdainful, like that of an avenging Nemesis waiting the hour to unmuzzle her lion with his brazen talons. However, this mouth has charming smiles, expanding with quite imperial grace, and one would not remark, when she wishes to express tender passions, that she had just launched an ancient imprecation or a modern anathema.

The chin, full of strength and resolution, rises firmly, and by a majestic contour terminates the profile, which is more that of a goddess than a woman.

Like all the beautiful women of the pagan age, Mlle. George has a full, broad forehead, swelling at the temples, but not at all lofty, very similar to that of the Venus de Milo—a free, voluptuous, powerful forehead, which is equally suitable for Clytemnestra and for Messalina.

A remarkable singularity of Mlle. George's neck is that, instead of rounding inside the nape, it forms a swollen contour which leaves the shoulders at the bottom of the head without any sinuousness, a diagnosis of athletic temperament developed at its highest point in the Farnesian Hercules.

The attachment of the arms is somewhat formidable for vigour of muscle and violence of contour. One of their bracelets would form a belt for a woman of slight figure; but they are very white and pure, terminated by a wrist of childish delicacy and tiny hands covered with dimples—true royal hands, made to bear the sceptre and clasp the sword-hilt of Æschylus and Euripides.

Mlle. George seems to belong to a prodigious and vanished race. She astonishes you as much as she charms you. One would call her a wife of Titan, a Cybele, mother of gods and men, with her crown of embattled towers. Her construction has something Cyclopean and Pelasgian. One feels on seeing her that she remains above like a column of granite, to bear witness to an annihilated generation, and that she is the last representative of the epic and superhuman type.

She is an admirable statue to place on the tomb of tragedy, buried for ever.

THÉOPHILE GAUTIER.

(This article is reproduced in the volume of "Portraits Contemporains," by Théophile Gautier, one vol., 1874.)

THÉOPHILE GAUTIER

ITALIENS.—*Farewell performance of Mlle.
George, May 21, 1849.*

Never was a dramatic career better filled than that of Mlle. George. Endowed with a beauty which appears to belong to a vanished race, and to have transformed the hardness of marble into a thing usually so fragile and fugitive that its natural comparison is a flower, Mlle. George has rendered equal services to both schools. No one has played drama better; the classicist and romanticist acclaim her exclusively. "What a Clytemnestra!" cries the one. "What a Lucretia Borgia!" exclaims the other. Racine and Hugo avow her for their priestess, and confide their greatest characters to her.

By the sculptural purity of her features, by that natural majesty which has consecrated her Queen of the Theatre in the age of the *ingénues*, by that imposing aspect of which the Melpomene of Velletri gives an idea, she was the most complete realisation of the dream of the tragic Muse; as much by her sonorous and profound voice, her imperious air, her natural and haughty gestures, her glance full of black threats or enervating charms, as through something violent and bold, familiarly haughty and simply terrible, she would have seemed to Shakespeare the heroine expressly formed for his vast dramas.

For a long time a like Agrippina and a similar Clytemnestra will not be seen ; neither will Lucretia Borgia nor Mary Tudor find an interpreter of that strength. The memory of Mlle. George will always be associated with those two formidable parts, where she has really collaborated with the poet, and those who have not seen the two pieces played by the great actress will not understand as well their irresistible, immense effect.

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Let us return to this curious and triumphant performance, where a rare phenomenon was produced—that of a rising sun and a setting sun confronting each other ; that is to say, Mlle. Rachel and Mlle. George, the flower which waxes, the splendour which is being enveloped in shadows ; hope and memory, yesterday and to-morrow, good-day and good-night. It was a fine tussle, that of the two women. Both were the glory of the theatre. The one was admired by our fathers, the other our sons will admire. It was an interesting spectacle, this battle of tragedy, with great blows of Alexandrines, where no one was conquered.

The breaks of song and dance, and an air by Mme. Pauline Viardot-Garcia, added still more to the powerful attraction of those names, Rachel and George—Rachel, who is playing for the last time before going on leave ; George, who will never play again.

AUGUSTE VACQUERIE (*Profils et Grimaces*, 4th edition, one vol. 8vo. Paris: Pagnene, 1864, pp. 270 *seq.*)

THE WRONG SIDE OF TRAGEDY

A singular fact took place yesterday. Mlle. George and Mlle. Rachel were both hissed.

It was the farewell performance of Mlle. George. On Wednesday Mme. Dorval was buried, in the same week Mlle. George retires—another death. Retirement is the first tomb of actresses. When they are not every evening under the regard of the crowd they adore, moved, applauded and illuminated by the footlights and poesy, mixing in their swelling souls genius and the people, they are nothing but a shadow of themselves—they no longer exist, they languish. Their real world is the world of dream, their ideal region is where the immortal ghosts of poets pass; this they breathe with full lungs. Nothingness begins for them in reality, in the street, in the home, in trees and springs. Their night is the sun. Life is their death.

Mlle. Rachel had not been to Mme. Dorval's funeral. She had not deigned to accompany that Bohemian, that dishevelled, inspired, insolent creature! But Mlle. George before playing drama had played tragedy. *Athalie* obtained the favour of Mary Tudor.

The two remaining tragédiennes were going to find themselves together for the first and last time—sunset and noon, the complete tragedy, past and present. The future was wanting, but tragedy has none.

Everything she has she was giving—Mlle. George, Mlle. Rachel and Racine! For the feast would not have been complete with Corneille. The conjunction of the two tragic constellations took place in *Iphigénie*. The ancients of the stalls of the Théâtre-Français were to be seen weeping in the street before the notice, drying a tear with their handkerchiefs, and smearing their eyes with snuff.

The prodigious day arrived. The theatre has not been overwhelmed by an earthquake. The doors are opened, and the curtain has been raised.

Mlle. Rachel, who was playing Eriphyles, appeared first, and was properly applauded on her entrance. She spoke with much fairness the recital of the taking of Lesbos, her hatred of Achilles before having seen him, and the melting of her anger at the first glance of the “amiable hero.” Here and there there was clapping.

When Mlle. George entered the tumult was quite different. A triple salvo made the house tremble, then during the whole scene the transports continued, and all the verses were punctuated with cheers.

The friends of Mlle. Rachel were piqued at this

inequality in the distribution of applause. They said that in a way Mlle. George was in her own home, that the performance, being for her benefit, the public must be principally composed of her friends, and that such a moderate reception given to a stranger, in face of the triumph awarded to the mistress of the house, above all when the stranger had come to do her a service, offended altogether hospitality and gratitude.

Exasperation seized them, so much so, that at the third act, when Mlle. George reappeared, a violent outbreak of hissing was to be heard.

There was a tumult, cries of anger, a tempest of acclamation, and a shower of bouquets. A wily friend could not have imagined a better plan to obtain an ovation for Mlle. George.

If this stupid hissing had only produced an increased success for the regretted actress to whom such a splendid good-bye was being said, unfortunately the reply was not far off.

Mlle. George's party made reprisals at the second entry of Mlle. Rachel, and Eriphyle received full in the face a hissing no less sharp than Clytemnestra.

There was some applause in protest, but the tribe of Mlle. Rachel was not in number, consequently Mlle. Rachel lost countenance a little, and no longer played the end of her part as at the beginning. Meanwhile, Mlle. George, escorted by the general sympathy, expanded more and more in the amplification of her beauty and talent; Mlle.

Rachel, abandoned, deserted and alone, retired and disappeared.

Thus the *mot* was realised which Mlle. Rachel said herself, when Victor Hugo was giving *les Burgraves* at the Théâtre-Français, and for a moment there was a question of engaging Mlle. George to play Guanhumara. Mlle. Rachel opposed the engagement, and on that occasion made this intelligent remark: "The day on which Mlle. George is at the Théâtre-Français I shall be nothing more than a statuette."

The ancients of tragedy wept under their spectacles. As for me, I was very happy.

Everything ends, even tragedies. The curtain is lowered, and the two actresses are called. Mlle. Rachel refused to appear.

Then Mme. Viardot lent her powerful and subtle voice to some Spanish airs full of originality; then Mlle. Plunked recited intelligently a charming little poem; then *le Moineau de Lesbie* (Lesbie's Sparrow) was expected, which was to end the bill. But instead of the mistress of Catullus, a black gentleman presented himself, advanced to the footlights, and after the customary three bows announced that Mlle. Rachel was too fatigued to play.

Mlle. Rachel must have been scarcely flattered by the effect produced at this breaking of her word. Nobody called her back. The black gentleman having added that Mme. Viardot offered to sing another air to replace *le Moineau de Lesbie*, cheers

broke out, as if there had been a gain from the change, and some one even said, "They only owed us a sparrow, and now they are giving us a nightingale!"

So thus it is that Comedy must always take a part. Tragedy says to her, "Away with you!" but Comedy does not go. Chased from the stage she comes into the house, and the pit supplements the author.

There is the piece, but there is the performance; there is the heroine, but there is the actress. O Clytemnestra of the terrible profile! O sinister Eriphyle! O strolling players!

May 1849.

ARSÈNE HOUSSAYE, *Confessions of Half-a-century*
(*les Confessions d'un Demi-siècle*), 1830–1899.
Vol. VI, p. 29.

During a complete period beauty was *de rigueur* at the Théâtre-Français. All actresses of talent had to be beautiful. That was my programme. I can still recall that radiant decameron which succeeded the two incomparable beauties, Mlle. Mars and Mlle. George. Those two great actresses, worthy of history, are not forgotten. One can say that one lives again more or less with posterity according to the place conquered in the memory of one's contemporaries; or it is better to say that if the future does not always accept the enthusiasms of the past, it always takes stock of them.

Mlle. George had been given a last farewell performance. She wanted to return to the stage ; I begged her to remain behind the scenes. She said to me, with a bitter smile, “ Ah, if I were ten years younger you wouldn’t sing that song to me, because I would give you one of those talkings-to a man always remembers.”

She was then eighty !

Very fortunate are those who die under the theatrical sky. As soon as actresses are no longer in the smiling circle, as soon as lovers leave them, fortune goes back.

Mlle. Guimard, who refused the hand of a prince in the splendid times when she had an entertainment hall and a winter garden in her mansion, was glad in the end to marry a professor of the graces, that is to say, a dancing-master. Sophie Arnould, after having passed through all the splendours of an unparalleled luxury, goes without complaining to ask shelter and bread from her hairdresser. Mlle. Clairon, who lived like a queen and a sultana, found herself at sixty-five reduced to patching her tattered dresses—she who had never condescended to keep a needle ! Insolent in good fortune, she had also the pluck to be proud in her poverty. When an old friend went to see her she still spoke of her high relations, and instead of saying, “ I am poor,” she said, “ I am a philosopher.”

If this had been the real performance on retiring

of Mlle. George, it was, so to speak, another retirement into another world !

She owed it to herself, in memory of her beauty and glittering renown, no more to show her ruins on the stage—*it is unlucky to look at night-birds !*

JULES JANIN, *Queens of the World (les Reines du Monde)*, 1 vol. in 4to. Ch. Lahune & Co., 1862. *Mlle. George*, pp. 1 seq.

Jules Janin had been a lover of George's, and has dedicated some beautiful pages to her. From these pages we detach the following extracts.

For her Alexandre Dumas wrote that story of horror and gloom entitled *la Tour de Nesle*, one of the shocks of the century. Ah, how terrible and desperate she was in it ! With what ardour she precipitated herself into that fierce fray, and into the crimes and abominable stories where chance is a god and the impossible a force. Moreover, a strange thing, she found the gestures and the accent for all those works so different to everything which had been the object of her cult and studies. A daughter of tradition through classical works, she had, in turn, the living tradition of the new drama, and by her example and the recollections she left, she still shows to-day the way which leads to the romantic realms. She left her traces as much as Boccaccio amidst the bloody shadows and

stories of the Middle Ages. Before creating Marguerite de Bourgogne she had performed, in all the varied and diverse phases of her life abandoned to every chance, the *Queen Christine of Sweden*, still a strange and new drama by Alexandre Dumas, a young man intoxicated with every fever of style and innovation.

As this Christine, at twenty and at sixty, passing through every phase of authority, of abdication, of murder and vengeance, of youth and love, Mlle. George displayed infinite resources ; she smiled and raged, she was queen and woman, she was power and abdication.

These new dramas, which were of a style which did not know how to stop, and which demanded not less than four or five hours of infinite zeal, found Mlle. George equal to such painful and grievous labour. Nothing could lessen her courage ; she was always ready, and with indefatigable step she passed through the outbreaks, passions, sorrows, despairs and great battles which held her audience attentive.

Certainly it was no more the times of the parts of a moment, of tragedies in which two or three scenes sufficed for the popularity of an actor. *Rodogùne*, *Athalie*, *Clytemnestre*, all three of them did not represent the trouble and work of a single *Marie Tudor*.

In the implacable part of Marie Tudor, Mlle. George mastered triumphantly the genius and intention of M. Victor Hugo, the absolute master of minds and souls. M. Victor Hugo had given

the part of doña Sol and la Thisbé to Mlle. Mars, and had created for Mme. Dorval the part of Catarina. He wrote for Mlle. George those crimes, those miseries, those sorrows, *Marie Tudor* and *Lucrèce Borgia*—two imperishable memories !

She it was who was so terrible under the blows of bloody Mary ! She it was who was so pardonable at the moment when Lucretia Borgia remembers that she is a mother ! Certainly she was the woman “clever at enthusing the crowd for the great and the true,” such as the poet had dreamed about.

* * * * *

The praise is superb, and especially issuing from such a mouth. “Ah, then you take him ! Ah, your lover ! What does your lover matter to me ? Are all the girls in England going to demand account from you of their lovers at this hour ? Pardieu ! I protect mine as I can, and at any cost !” Speaking thus she was fierce and touching at the same time.

The poet has the same admiration and the same gratitude for Lucretia Borgia. M. Victor Hugo was himself alone the absolute judge of the way in which his great dreams were to be accomplished, and the day after the great battles, better than criticism itself, he took stock of the effect produced by his actors.

* * * * *

She was admirable too, but it was a difficult

piece to give life to, in that *Maréchale d'Ancre* which M. Alfred Vigny conceived in one of his days of rage. At the same time she accepted gallantly, with joy and pride, all the dramas of the new school. One day she was la Brinvilliers, and the next Queen Caroline of England, or maybe she stopped in those paths of brambles and poetical laurels, and we see her become Lady Macbeth, Agrippina, Athalie and Rodogùne. She played the Clytemnestra and Agrippina of Soumet, and did not disdain M. Arnault's dramas. Hers was a subtle and abundant talent, and a fruitful imagination; moreover, such bravery united to such imagination; never tired and always ready!

One evening she defied, on her own closed field, Mlle. Rachel, then in all the renown of life and the ardent apogee of her talent. She was playing Clytemnestra; Mlle. Rachel, Eriphyle. After the first courtesies, when the two rivals of a moment, Mlle. Rachel in her apogee, Mlle. George in her decline, studied each other well, one saw them by tacit agreement each summon to her side all her forces and fight freely as to who should triumph in the admiration of that attentive audience. Then the pupil of Mlle. Raucourt was to be seen recalling to herself all her superb beauty, and with her grand gestures and sovereign voice crush the frail Eriphyle, who fights in vain against that strength and irresistible power. It was a great fight, and a memorable one for all! But Clytemnestra was reaching the end of her path; she could say, like

the old wrestler in Virgil, “ Here are my cestus and my disc, and all the weapons of my past bouts.”

To disappear after this great triumph, after having forced her young and unhappy rival to applaud her publicly, here was an unexpected fifth act, unhoped for in this famous work which comprises more than half-a-century of combats, of successes and of labours.

J. JANIN.

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